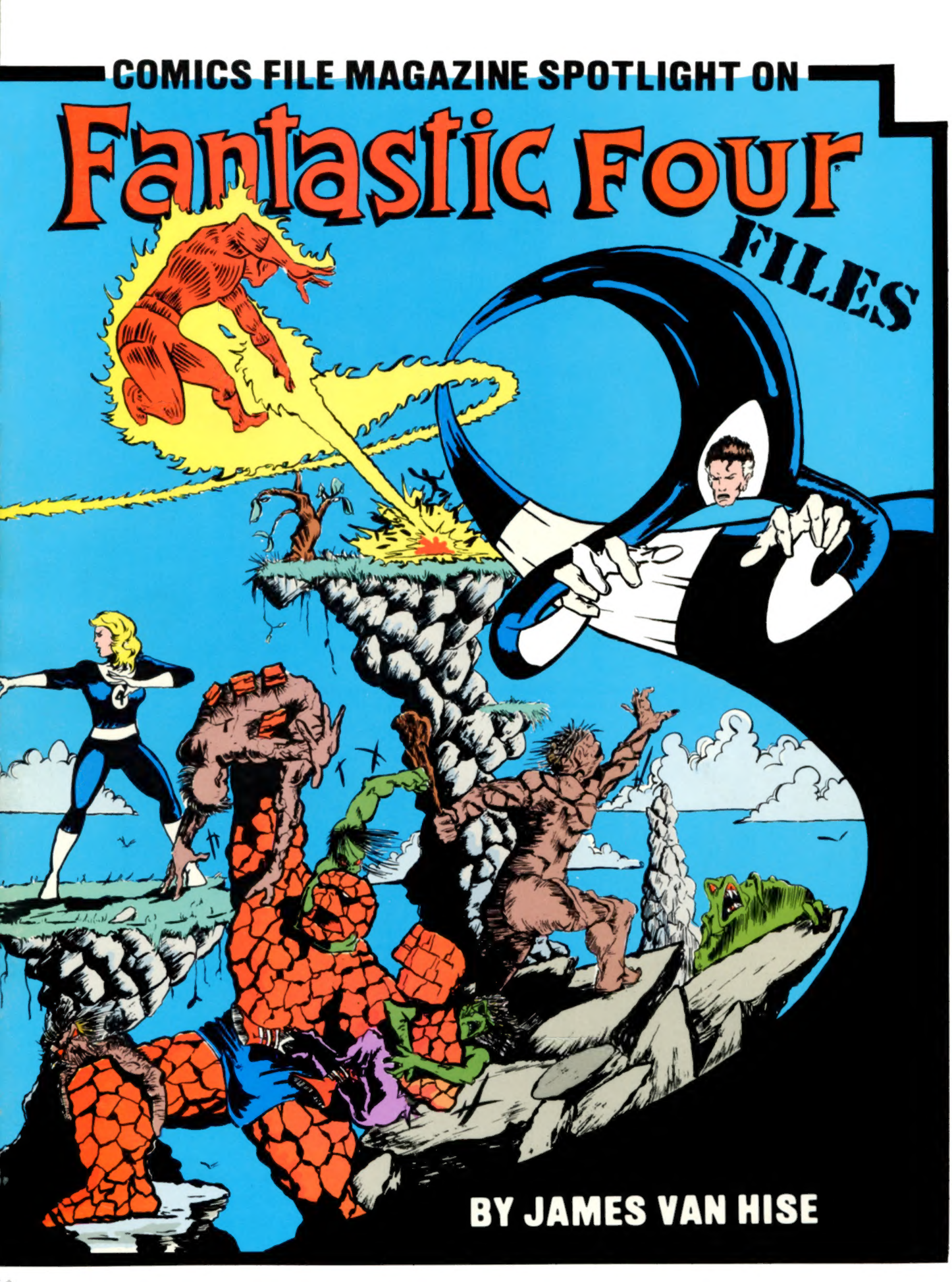
COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON

Fantastic Four FILES



BY JAMES VAN HISE

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

THE Fantastic Four FILES

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COMICS FILE MAGAZINE NUMBER TWO

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COMICS FILE MAGAZINE is published to provide a historical record of that phase of American popular culture known as comic books. If this book helps to preserve the record of the many accomplishments of the talented creators working in that field, for whatever company, then it will have admirably served the purpose for which it was created.

DEDICATED TO STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY—THEY STARTED IT ALL!

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Introduction

In 1938, **Action Comics** first appeared on the stands introducing a character known as Superman and the superhero comic book was born. Other soon-to-be classic, and not-so-classic, heroes followed quickly on its heels. In 1939, The Batman made his debut in **Detective Comics** 27. Wonder Woman and Green Lantern soon followed.

There seemed to be no end to the creativity at DC Comics in the '30s and '40s. Elsewhere Timely had just introduced the Sub-Mariner, Captain America and the Human Torch. Comic books were flourishing and getting better every day. But by the late 1940s writers and artists saw comics as just "kids stuff," and they wrote them that way. No longer did you find the heroic feeling and dramatic mood that were so prevalent a decade before—and superhero comics were soon on the verge of extinction! Every month titles quietly disappeared.

Until...in 1961, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, two men who knew what comics should be, had an idea.

The idea became **The Fantastic Four** and the Marvel Age of Comics had begun.

But that seems a long time ago to many of today's comic book fans. Unless you were there buying comic books at that time, it's hard to understand the impact that the Fantastic Four had on the comic book industry.

For me, as for many other comic book fans, that's all just history. I didn't discover the Fantastic Four until five years ago when I haltingly followed my favorite artist from the **X-Men** to the **Fantastic Four**. The stories and art provided by John Byrne were incredible. I loved it! It was both fun and believable adventure of the highest order. Even though I began reading the book with issue 238, I didn't wonder too often about its history. I assumed that the pre-Byrne issues were garbage. It was only Byrne that made the book so great. Or so I thought until I read an interview with John in **Comics Feature** in which he said that he was trying to do stories in the same way that Stan & Jack had done them in the '60s. He also said that he knew he could never be 'that good.' **WHAT!** Something could be better than...this!

Driven by curiousity, I started to search the comic book stores in my neighborhood for back issues of **The Fantastic Four** and the first one I found was issue 39, titled "A Blind Man Shall Lead Them." I read it 6 times—in one day! It was great. Here were the Fantastic Four, who had temporarily lost their powers, at the mercy of Doctor Doom. And the only one that could help them was the blind Daredevil. The book ended on a cliffhanger and I almost went nuts until I found the following issue to see how it all worked out!

Jack Kirby's artwork had power to it that John Byrne's lacked, power that no one's artwork has any more. It leaps off the page to pull you into the story. I was hooked. And I could also see how these tales could launch a comic book revolution.

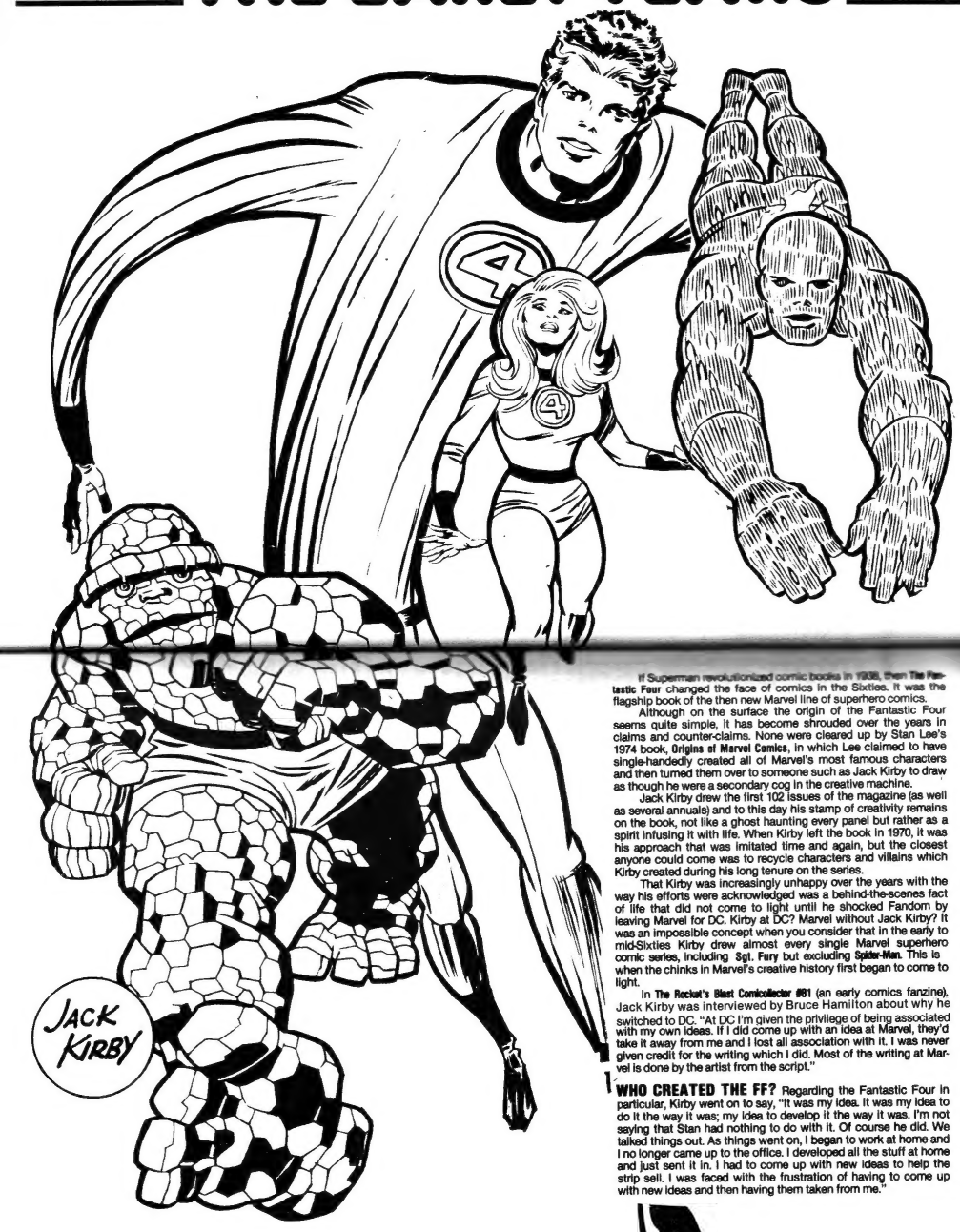
But back issues of the **FF** are very expensive. So I was satisfied to just read the reprints. The ideas never seem to run out in those books. Great characters such as Doctor Doom and Galactus were introduced almost without fanfare. The stories are so gripping they seem real.

In issue after issue, Stan & Jack set new precedents for comic books. But, alas...Stan Lee & Jack Kirby, and even John Byrne have all moved on to other projects. Stan is working in animation, Jack does special projects and John has moved over to that self-same man from Krypton that started the first superhero revolution:

In this volume of **COMICS FILE MAGAZINE** we hope to evoke a bit of the excitement of those halycon days of yore. Older fans will enjoy a pleasant trip down memory lane while newer fans will discover the magic of those older issues just as I did. They'll finally learn just what everyone was so excited about. We'll also take a look at the future of the Fantastic Four. With talents such as Roger Stern and John Buscema at the helm it is looking ever brighter. Once again the torch has been passed.

JIM KEEGAN
June 27, 1986

THE EARLY YEARS



If Superman revolutionized comic books in 1938, then **The Fantastic Four** changed the face of comics in the Sixties. It was the flagship book of the then new Marvel line of superhero comics.

Although on the surface the origin of the Fantastic Four seems quite simple, it has become shrouded over the years in claims and counter-claims. None were cleared up by Stan Lee's 1974 book, **Origins of Marvel Comics**, in which Lee claimed to have single-handedly created all of Marvel's most famous characters and then turned them over to someone such as Jack Kirby to draw as though he were a secondary cog in the creative machine.

Jack Kirby drew the first 102 issues of the magazine (as well as several annuals) and to this day his stamp of creativity remains on the book, not like a ghost haunting every panel but rather as a spirit infusing it with life. When Kirby left the book in 1970, it was his approach that was imitated time and again, but the closest anyone could come was to recycle characters and villains which Kirby created during his long tenure on the series.

That Kirby was increasingly unhappy over the years with the way his efforts were acknowledged was a behind-the-scenes fact of life that did not come to light until he shocked Fandom by leaving Marvel for DC. Kirby at DC? Marvel without Jack Kirby? It was an impossible concept when you consider that in the early to mid-Sixties Kirby drew almost every single Marvel superhero comic series, including **Sgt. Fury** but excluding **Spider-Man**. This is when the chinks in Marvel's creative history first began to come to light.

In **The Rocket's Blast Comicollector #81** (an early comics fanzine), Jack Kirby was interviewed by Bruce Hamilton about why he switched to DC. "At DC I'm given the privilege of being associated with my own ideas. If I did come up with an idea at Marvel, they'd take it away from me and I lost all association with it. I was never given credit for the writing which I did. Most of the writing at Marvel is done by the artist from the script."

WHO CREATED THE FF? Regarding the Fantastic Four in particular, Kirby went on to say, "It was my idea. It was my idea to do it the way it was; my idea to develop it the way it was. I'm not saying that Stan had nothing to do with it. Of course he did. We talked things out. As things went on, I began to work at home and I no longer came up to the office. I developed all the stuff at home and just sent it in. I had to come up with new ideas to help the strip sell. I was faced with the frustration of having to come up with new ideas and then having them taken from me."

THE Fantastic Four
1
NOV.
10¢
FEATURING:
"THE THING!"
"MR. FANTASTIC!"
"HUMAN TORCH!"
"INVISIBLE GIRL!"
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
I WANT TO BE INVISIBLE FAST ENOUGH! HOW CAN WE STOP THIS CREATURE TORCH?
JUST WAIT AND SEE, SISTER! THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE ONLY BEGUN TO FIGHT!
WE THREE OF US CAN'T DO A THING! IT'S UP TO THE THING ALONE!
I'LL TAKE MORE THAN ROPES TO KEEP MISTER FANTASTIC OUT OF ACTION, JOHN!

In **Origins of Marvel Comics**, Stan Lee describes the genesis o the series with Kirby waiting in the wings to accept the book as a *fait accompli* after all the really creative work was finished. Lee describes a meeting with Martin Goodman wherein Goodman suggested that a superhero team book would be a good idea since DC's **Justice League of America** was selling very well. Lee also wan ted to do a comic book such as he himself would like to read, one where the characters would not have secret identities and would also have genuine human emotions. The closest Lee comes to giving Kirby any creative credit is when he says, "After kicking it around with Martin and Jack for awhile I decided to call our quartet The Fantastic Four. I wrote a detailed first synopsis for Jack to follow, and the rest is history." Of his working relationship with Kirby, Lee explains, "I had only to give Jack an outline of a story and he would draw the entire strip, breaking down the outline into exactly the right number of panels replete with action and drama. Then it remained for me to take Jack's artwork and add the captions and dialogue." This is not as simple as it sounds.

A comic book plot is generally a simple outline written on a couple sheets of paper. When an artist and writer have been working together for any length of time, the plot can consist of no more than what information is exchanged in a phone call. This is the "Marvel style" of writing. The artist is left to break the story down, establish how the conflict looks and add his own flourishes. In order to do this coherently, the artist must write notes on the border of the page of art and next to each panel describing the progression of the story. This often includes the dialogue so that the writer winds up just putting it in his own words. Whether the artist gets a co-author credit is often a behind-the-scenes struggle. In the case of Lee and Kirby this progressed to the point that Kirby was literally writing each book he drew and Lee just did the cap tions and dialogue (rewriting Kirby's words into his own) while still taking a full writing credit. This caused some unforseen problems for Kirby later as other writers looked forward to working with Jack and getting the same kind of sweetheart deal in which Kirby did the lion's share of the work.

That Lee had an important input cannot be disputed, even if it

WHAT'S WITH THAT "ONLY YOU"?? WHO WERE YA EXPECTING ... LYNDON B.??
KNOCK IT OFF, YOU TWO! THIS IS NO PLACE FOR ROUGH-HOUSING!
HONESTLY, BOYS I'LL NEVER GET DINNER READY WITH ALL THIS COMMOTION
JOHNNY! FLAME OFF! YOU'LL GET ASHES ALL OVER THE FURNITURE!
I WAS EXPECTING TO FINISH MY MAP! IT'S THE MOST EXCITING THING TO DO AROUND HERE LATELY!

was just in rewriting Kirby's own captions and dialogue into a perhaps more dramatically satisfying form. This can be seen when comparing the Lee/Kirby comics with Kirby's solo books at DC. The visuals had the same impact but the writing style was markedly different. His strengths clearly lie in creating and plotting. In **Silver Star #1**, a 1983 title from Pacific Comics, one of Kirby's lines of dialogue reads: "Hey! Come on, mister big! Don't rattle your gonads in *my* ears!" How picturesque.

While in more recent years, Jack Kirby has been reluctant to discuss his early years at Marvel, in **The Spirit 39** ("Kitchen Sink," February 1983) Kirby once more dwells on his early creative years at Marvel in an interview conducted by Will Eisner. He describes his returning to Atlas in the late Fifties on a dark day when the company was contemplating going out of business, and that he urged Stan Lee to hold it together because he had some ideas he wanted to institute about bringing back superheroes which were on the wane at the time. Lee supposedly gave Kirby's ideas credence because Kirby had been a mover and shaker at Timely (which became Atlas which became Marvel) in the early Forties. Kirby is, after all, the co-creator of Captain America along with Joe Simon. What the interview fails to explore is why Kirby's ideas (which included Spider-Man) were not instituted until several years of monster books had foraged the newsstands under the Atlas imprint, books in which Kirby was the mainstay.

While there is little doubt that Jack Kirby was a prime force in the creation of the Fantastic Four, perhaps responsible for most of the cosmic concepts and plots, Stan Lee was equally important. While not the sole voice that he would seem to claim in his **Origins of Marvel Comics**, he populated Jack Kirby's fantastic worlds with people the reader could identify with.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS The early issues of **Fantastic Four** show the raw creative energies at work, as well as clearly less analysis than goes into a story today. The origin centers on Reed Richards stealing a rocket he supervised construction of so that they can "beat the Commies into space." He needs Ben Grimm as a pilot but Sue comes along because of that "where you go, I go" chestnut and her kid brother Johnny accompanies them for the same reason. How scientific. For some reason the ship isn't shielded against cosmic rays and their exposure to them changes the foursome. Upon crash landing they each find they've been transformed. In one of the silliest moments of this scene, when Ben Grimm changes into an orange-skinned behemoth, he becomes so angry that he grabs a tree and breaks it off in his hands. But why would he have had any inkling he could even do this? It's not exactly your average reflex reaction. The only reason all this wonderful hokum works when you read it is because it happens quickly (unlike the wordy, overwritten panels in many **Marvel** Comics today). The artwork by Kirby is strangely atmospheric, certainly much different even than the monster books he'd been drawing at the time and different from the way his work would change over the years. It has a very menacing air about it. They were certainly not trying to imitate a DC comic.

The second issue of FF introduced the Skrulls from outer space in a plotline which was picked up in a later Fantastic Four annual. Issue four revived the Sub-Mariner, a popular character in Timely Comics of the Forties. But issue five introduced their quintessential nemesis—Doctor Doom. There was a furious imagination at work in those early issues as that single issue not only introduced Dr. Doom, gave a capsule origin, but also had the Fantastic Four forced to undertake a mission back in time—and it was all perfectly balanced. There was an art then in telling a story in a single issue, and leaving the reader satisfied. It had tension, suspense and a fast-paced plot. In issue 6 Dr. Doom returned in a team-up with the Sub-Mariner. Namor returned in number 9 and Dr. Doom returned in number ten, and yet you enjoyed how these return engagements were handled. There was a freshness about them rather than having them seem as if they just didn't have any better ideas. The people producing these comics actually seemed to like what they were doing, and on a monthly basis. You could tell that they looked forward to writing and drawing the next issue as much as we looked forward to reading it.

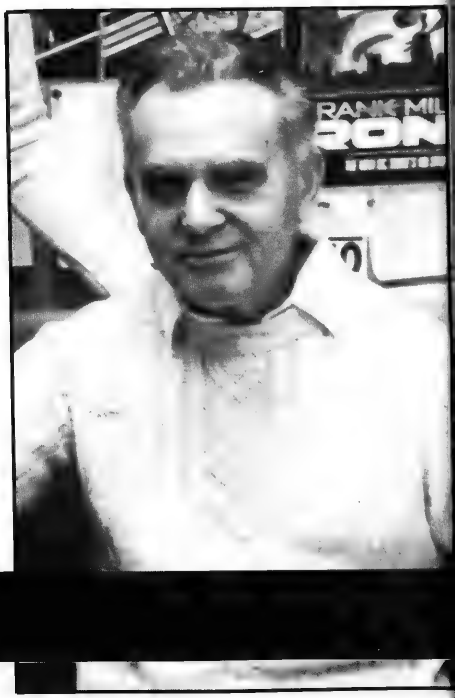
One of the nagging secrets in the FF over the years is what Dr. Doom looks like under his mask. While Darth Vader's true appearance was revealed in **Return of the Jedi**, Dr. Doom's true likeness will doubtless remain shrouded in mystery, at least within the pages of the comic. Jack Kirby has always been free with the facts about the good Doctor. "Dr. Doom was a perfectionist. Dr. Doom was a handsome guy and he had to hide his face in a steel mask because he had a scratch on his face. He couldn't stand that scratch." One wonders if he had never heard of plastic surgery. At a convention some years ago, Jack Kirby did a drawing of Doom without his mask and it was indeed a man with a small scratch on his cheek. Some fans believed that Doom bore an uncanny likeness to Stan Lee but Kirby denied any such intent towards resemblance.

A TORRENT OF CREATIVITY Those first few years of the FF featured a creative explosion incomparable in any other comic book title. The first 67 issues saw the birth of such characters as the Skrulls, Dr. Doom, Puppet Master, The Watcher, the Red Ghost and his super apes, the Mad Thinker, Dragon Man, Diablo, the Inhumans, the Black Panther, Galactus, the Silver Surfer, Klaw, the Frightful Four and the strange being Him (who under other hands became known as Warlock.) Then the torrent ceased. One could sense an unseen hand turning off the flow. After issue 67 no new major characters were created. It just became a revolving cycle of appearances by old characters such as Dr. Doom, Galactus, the Silver Surfer and yet another Thing-on-the-rampage story. Kirby was holding back and it was clearly evident that this was so. He was obviously tired of creating something and not only watching Stan Lee take the bows but seeing Marvel absorb the character into their widening stable of successful Jack Kirby creations. So Kirby put on the brakes, did good work, but did not give the book that extra creative juice which had boosted it to popularity over the years, and the most telling aspect of all this is that Stan Lee was unable to pick up that slack or infuse the book with new major characters of his own. 'Nuff said.

IN KIRBY'S AFTERMATH When Kirby left the book, the word came down that the FF must still have the Kirby look. The problem was that in imitating the art they neglected to imitate the necessary creativity, if such is even possible. So the years went by with a round robin of writers and artists doing pretty much what Kirby himself had done during his last three years on the title. There were glimmers of interest over the years but under the almost constant inks of Joe Sinnott (who did such a wonderful job inking Kirby), all the art looked the same and any character which might have been brought to the book by a different penciller was submerged under Sinnott's inks. Even when George Perez (whose work on DC's **Teen Titans** book has made him one of the most popular artists in comics today) drew the FF back around '77, Sinnott did not ink to bring out Perez's strengths in drawing but rather to make it look like Joe Sinnott art, including having the male characters constantly gnashing their teeth (i.e. **FF number 186**, page six, panel seven, as well as many others in the same issue). The stuff had not only begun to look alike long before this, it was alike. Even distinctly non-Kirby stylists like Bill Sienkiewicz had their art transformed into ersatz Kirby under the inks of Joe Sinnott.

JACK KIRBY

IN THE DAYS OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR



It was 1961 and a small comic book company (which had been publishing monster comics under the Atlas imprint) was looking to change direction again. Renaming themselves Marvel, they decided that their first of a series of super-hero titles would be a team book. DC had been having a good response to their **Justice League of America**, but the then young Marvel Comics had no established heroes they could team up like that. They owned the rights to characters they had published over a decade before, such as Captain America, Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch, but something different was needed. That something different was provided by Jack Kirby.

"I came in with presentations," Kirby recalls. "I'm not gonna' wait around for conferences. I said, 'This is what you have to do.' I came in with The Fantastic Four. I didn't fool around. I said you've got to do super-heroes."

INTERVIEW

THE
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Fantastic
Four
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
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JAN.
THEY HAD TAKEN A DEADLY OATH TO DESTROY THE FANTASTIC FOUR!!
THEY WERE MERCILESS! THEY WERE INHUMAN! THEY HAD POWERS FAR GREATER THAN EARTHMEN! THEY WERE
"SKRULLS FROM OUTER SPACE!"

Kirby had recently created and done several issues of the **Challengers of the Unknown** for DC which featured characters whose personalitites had some similarities to the FF but he didn't want to do just another fantastic adventure book. He wanted fantastic heroes.

"Super powers are a show gimmick," Jack explains. "Why does a comedian decide to drop his pants on stage? Or why does a dancer come out and do a certain type of dance? Why break-dancing? The answer is attention. You want the reader's attention. If you can't get it with ordinary people, you get it with extraordinary people.

"At the time, the big topic was radiation. We had recently exploded the bomb (just 15 years before) and I was looking to create supermen. In all my work, you'll see the times are reflected. I don't contrive stories. I don't give you B.S., and I'm not giving you fairy tales. At the time, radiation was the big topic and The Fantastic Four came out of those times. Hiroshima was still fresh. All the bomb experiments were still fresh."

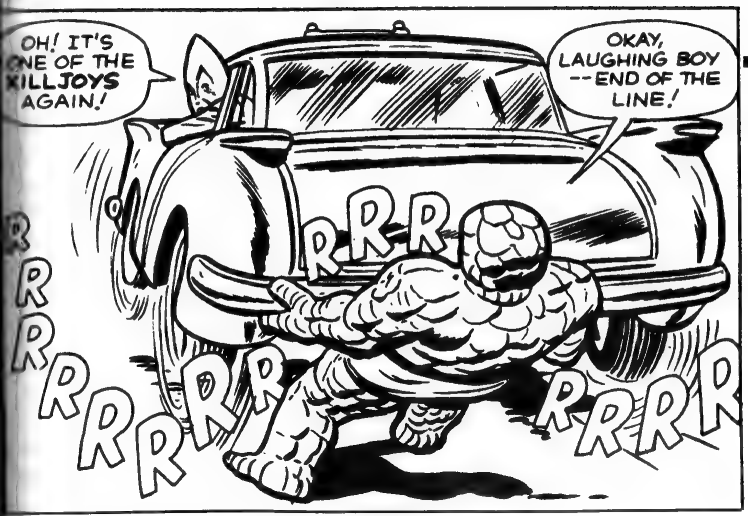
But even though the Fantastic Four were born out of radiation, this aspect of their origin slipped into the background as the characters themselves became the most important elements of the stories.

"That's the idea," Kirby states, "to dramatize that kind of background with good stories. In Sky Masters, the daily strip I did dealing with space, I had to dramatize prosaic objects. I've always dealt with ordinary people. Captain America was an ordinary person — until they experimented on him."

But unlike other super-heroes, The Fantastic Four began as a team of people who tried to work behind the scenes without fanfare or colorful costumes. But after three issues, this approach changed.

"It has to have time to grow," says Kirby, explaining why it was tried without the concept of unifying costumes first. "As you take that time, you begin to think about the connotations of what you're doing. You try to make your story sales-effective. You've got to think of sales, not only of good stories. You have a duty to your publisher and you have a duty to your own prestige and credibility. I had that duty, just as in any job."

HIGHER AND HIGHER, LIKE A SILVER BULLET, RIDES THE SLEEK SPACE CRAFT...
WE HAD TO DO IT! WE HAD TO BE THE FIRST!
BUT NOTHING COULD STOP THE COSMIC STORM FROM STRIKING OUR HAND OUT!
KAK TAC TAC TAC TAC
HEAR THAT?! THE COSMIC RAYS ARE WARNING YOU ABOUT SUE!
THEY'RE SOMETHING THE SHIP! THE SHIELDING ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH!
BUT I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING!
NATURALLY! THEY'RE OUTSIDE OF LIMITS OF YOUR SENSES! YOU CAN'T FEEL 'EM— BUT I CAN! I KNOW ABOUT YOU SUE! SAM!
ANY HEADS IT'S POUNDING THOUGH IT'S ABOUT TO BURST!
BEN WAS RIGHT!! WE SHOULD HAVE WAITED! WE SHOULD HAVE WAITED! THE SHIELDING'S FAILING!
JOHNNY! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?
I DON'T KNOW, SIR! MY BODY FEELS HOT— LIKE I'M ON FIRE!! I'LL FREE LIKE I'M BURNING UP!
USHA!! LISTEN TO ME...
SOMEBODY ELSE TAKE THE CONTROLS... I CAN'T HANDLE THE SHIP ANY MORE!! MY ARMS ARE HEAVY— TOO HEAVY— TOO HEAVY— GOT TO LIE DOWN— CAN'T MOVE!!
BEN!



The character in the FF which has had the most long-term impact is The Thing, the person who has changed the most by what happened to them.

"The Thing was just an ordinary guy. He went to college, became a flyer and had a conventional background like anybody else. But now he was a Thing. He was a well-adjusted Thing but still, he had the problem of looking and being like a monster and he had to live with that. At times, of course, that would irritate him. How'd you like to go into a bowling alley and have the ball crumble in your hands? That would be irritating.If I were super-strong, it might not be all beneficial. So The Thing had that problem of looking like a monster and having this super-strength. Therefore you've got a good story problem. In that kind of atmosphere you can't fail because the person reading it will relate to it and understand immediately what the problem is.The problem sometimes isn't the super-villain, it's your own super-strength. It's your own irritability. The Thing would go berserk as much as the villain would. He'd smash everything up and I'd feel the same way.

"In the case of The Fantastic Four, they all adjusted in their own way. Reed Richards was a well adjusted guy. He could take it in stride. Ben had a different problem. If Reed Richards had been the monster, he might have behaved differently. It's like, I can't share your feelings, I can only feel my own. I can only project my own and hope that other people accept me."

YOU SPEAK AS THOUGH YOU ARE SACRIFICING YOURSELF!
DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT AN HONOR I OFFER YOU?? YOU CAN BECOME PRINCESS NAMORA, BRIDE OF THE SUB-MARINER!! CO-RULER OF EARTH!

A DYNAMIC BALANCE

The tension achieved in **The Fantastic Four** was a result of the contrasting powers and personalities of the characters in the stories, whether they be heroes or villains.

"Reed Richards was scholarly, but he was caught in an extraordinary situation. Of course he would react in a very scholarly way. He would use his powers as a brainy guy would because Reed Richards is a brain — a very cool character. Ben Grimm couldn't be cool. He had to handle an extreme position. He had a face that was certainly extraordinary. People react to that. You may be a very nice guy but if you have a monstrous face you're going to make a very poor first impression.

"Reed would react differently than Ben Grimm because he had a different problem. He might have almost poked fun at himself, being able to stretch almost a quarter mile — he might have found that amusing while Ben Grimm might have found that annoying."

BUT, HAVING REAINED HIS FULL STRENGTH AGAIN, THE UNDERSEA MONARCH SCATTERS HIS ASTONISHED ATTACKERS LIKE TENPINS.!
BACK, YOU CLODS! NONE MAY STRIKE THE IMPERIAL PERSON OF NAMOR, THE SUB-MARINER!

In the fourth issue of the FF, a new volatile element was added in the form of the original Sub-Mariner, who was discovered after having been suffering from amnesia many years. While other characters, such as The Human Torch, were new characters with an old name, this time the genuine article was used.

"I felt that Sub-Mariner was a powerful character and should be used," says Kirby. "It had originally been done by Bill Everett. I used everything that was at hand.I would formulate the events of **The Fantastic Four** and I would formulate it in accordance with balance. In other words, if I had one type of story in one issue, I would see that it didn't remain static, that there was a change in the succeeding issues. So readers would always wait for the next issue and developments might not be what they expected. I think that was a sales value in the book."

One subplot in these early issues involves a physical attraction that Namor feels for Sue Storm. While he became Reed Richards unofficial rival for Sue's affections (she never would say **exactly** how she felt about Namor, other than to express sympathy for him), Kirby states that there were never any serious plans for Sue to become romantically involved with The Sub-Mariner.

"No, because in ordinary terms she would have gotten a divorce in a year," Kirby observes. "Living with Namor under the water, in the Bermuda Triangle or wherever he had his home, wouldn't have worked. I felt that she would have been happier with Reed Richards, and she was. She's an average girl and she, too, found herself in extraordinary circumstances. I think it's hard for a girl to shoulder invisibility. Girls like to be visible."

In the early days of the magazine, not all readers felt that Sue Storm was a very important part of the group. Fans often wrote in complaining about how ineffective she was, a facet which was actually worked into "A Day In The Life of The Fantastic Four" in issue 11. But Kirby always liked the character.

"She was a very important part of the group. The Invisible Girl represents something that we're looking for. Invisibility is a very powerful military conception. I can assure you that if invisibility became an actuality, that there would be a war. The nation that had invisibility would be at war the day that it made it practical. So in her own way, even then, she wielded a variety of powers. Because we don't know the connotations of invisibility."

MASTER OF MENACE

The fifth issue of **The Fantastic Four** introduced the mo popular villain not only of the series, but of all of Marv Comics, even 25 years later.

"Dr. Doom was the Man in the Iron Mask, which I felt we a classic character. I feel that there are certain characte that will never die. We'll tell them in different versions fo the rest of the centuries. Dracula will never die. Franke stein. They live inside us, and Dr. Doom will live inside us.

Dr. Doom wears a mask to hide a face deformed in an a cident, but in actuality, the disfigurement is largely mental

"Dr. Doom is a perfectionist," Kirby explains, revealin how he has always envisioned this character. "Actually D Doom is a fine-looking man except that he's got a scrat on his chin because of the college accident in th laboratory. It's like, 'Why should I have a scratch on m chin and you don't?' That thought got to him to the poi where he had to wear a steel mask. If Dr. Doom took off h mask and you felt you were looking at a great looking gu you'd be shocked because you'd think he'd been hiding monstrous face. You'd wonder why a guy would try to hid that. So he must have a mental aberration — he thinks he ugly.

"What I did was a satire on a perfectionist. He felt th the tiny little scratch ruined the perfection of his face. A tually he's very handsome. But that scratch was etched o his brain forever. And of course a mental aberration wi give birth to evil of some kind, or conflict or jealousy. D Doom is like that. That's the secret of Dr. Doom — he isn ugly. He's handsome. But he's a perfectionist and perfe tionists are their own devils. And think of all those ingeniu traps he's gotten the FF into. He's a dark reflection of th heroes."

YOU ARE MY PRISONERS, ALL OF YOU! IF YOU WISH ME TO SPARE YOUR LIVES, DO EXACTLY AS I COMMAND!
FIRST, SEND SUSAN STORM OUT TO ME! I SHALL HOLD HER AS A HOSTAGE TO INSURE THAT YOU DO WHAT I DEMAND OF YOU! NOW WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER?

HEROES AND GODS

Kirby created a lot of supporting characters in **The Fantastic Four** in the Sixties and one of those that had a huge impact is The Silver Surfer.

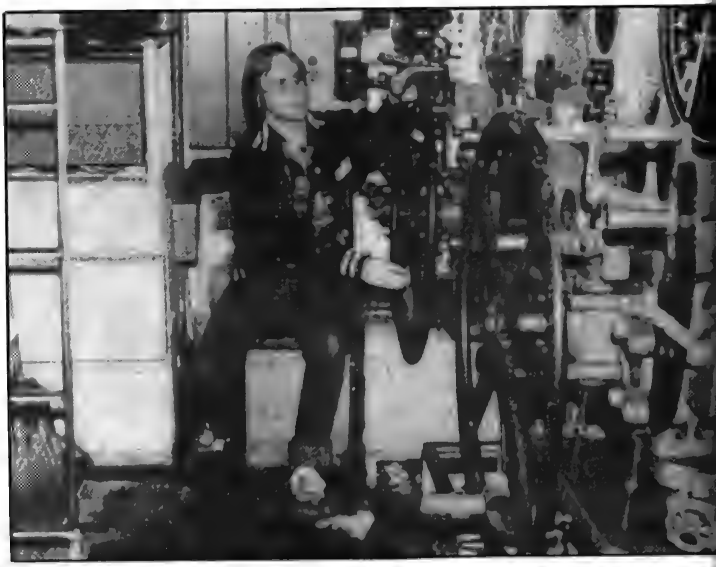
"I was a penciller and a storyteller and I insisted on doing my own writing. I always wrote my own story, no matter what it was. Nobody ever wrote a story for me. I created my own characters. I always did that. That was the whole point of comics for me. I created my own concepts and I enjoyed doing that. That's how I created the Silver Surfer.

"I'd been using gangsters and it wasn't fair for super-heroes to fight gangsters. My basic philosophy, if you want to call it that, is fairness. I believe in fairness. Gangsters shouldn't stand a chance against super-heroes so I had to find people who could compete on their own level and that give rise to the super-villain. I found myself coming out with the most powerful villain, and the most controversial (which is great for sales), and that's Galactus. I felt that somewhere around the cosmos are powerful things that we know nothing about and from that came Galactus. He was almost like a god and that's where I came up with the god concepts. There might be things out there that are ultimates compared to us. When I came up with Galactus I didn't know what to do with him. I couldn't kill Galactus, he was my god. What do you do do with God when you have him on your hands? So I backed away from him, which is what the characters in the book did. It cost the Silver Surfer his power and position and he became a fallen angel.Galactus zapped him and made him stay on Earth forever.That concept is so powerful that it moved me and it sold a lot of comic books. People found that same element in **Raiders of the Lost Ark**. When that feeling comes in it's a powerful feeling. It's powerful because it's a mystery. It's somewhere that there's a gap that you know nothing about in which things happen that we know nothing about and of course we interpret them in our own way.But they have such power that they move us.

"Somewhere out in the cosmos I believe there are things like that. I don't know what they are. I don't know what they look like, so I have to represent them in my own fashion. No matter how you represent them, they're so powerful that they'll attract the reader, and that's my job."

Jack left the Fantastic Four after doing over a hundred issues and some very memorable annuals. When he returned to Marvel several years later, the closest he came to doing the FF again was a bizarre issue of **What If?** and some covers of the FF during the time when Roy Thomas was writing it. It's clear that the FF hold a special spot among all of the characters that Jack created and in a different world we might even expect to see him drawing the title again.

ROY THOMAS
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF STAN

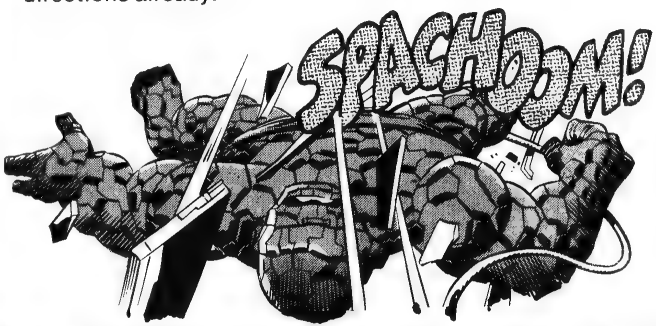


"My main memories are of my early days, when I first came to work at Marvel," says Roy, recalling what it was like to be working at the company from 1966 on when things were really moving in The Marvel Age of Comics.

"I was sort of a proofreader and assistant editor, which didn't mean that much with The Fantastic Four. Stan did pretty much everything except the backup proofreading on that himself.I remember how thrilled I'd be when I'd see Jack Kirby bring in the pages of the books he did.

"I remember the day that the Silver Surfer artwork came in. Jack had just called him the Surfer but he had totally invented this character in the middle of the Galactus story that he and Stan had talked about over the phone. Stan was really knocked out by it."

Another memory from those days concerns how Stan handled the dialogue after Kirby turned in the finished artwork on which Jack had attached dialogue and continuity directions already.



INTERVIEW

"Stan tried, almost self-consciously, to avoid using
of Jack's dialogue. Jack would always write dialogue
the side in the border. Stan would change the dialogue,
even the motivations, to the point where, in the end,
story was the same one which he and Jack had talked
I think that Jack was contributing the great majority of
plots with very little direction from Stan. But the dialo
was always a hundred percent, or almost one hundred
cent, Stan's. Maybe occasionally a phrase of Jack's w
get in, but only rarely. I think it was a matter of pride. S
wanted to be the writer of the book and he wasn't goin
use anybody else's dialogue."

Roy Thomas wanted to be the first person after Stan
to script the FF, but I couldn't handle that and do **Spi**
Man, and Stan really felt strongly about me doing **Spider-**
so I ended up doing that instead. So Archie Goodwin
the FF and I came back a little later and did that one-is
story with the Black Panther, which was sort of a s
South Africa situation. Then Stan came back on
book for awhile and I came back and did a run off-and
with Buscema and Rich Buckler, and then, of course,
George Perez, which in many ways was the most fun
before I moved to California.

"There were a couple of issues I really liked with Geo
For one thing, I'd always wanted to do an Impossible M
story. But Stan, because of the sales of issue 11 ye
before, would never let anyone do it. Then I finally got
permission to do an Impossible Man story and we had a
of fun with it, with The Impossible Man showing up
wanting to have his own comic book. I always thought
it was a precursor of Ambush Bug. The next issue I wan
to do a takeoff on the old Legion try-out type of thing.
had the Texas Twister, who was a suggestion that M
Friedrich made when we were at a convention together.
issues with George Perez were a lot of fun."

Even after Kirby left the book, Marvel had made a c
scious editorial effort to have the book retain at least a
by look, no matter who was drawing it then.

"You mean there wasn't under John Byrne? Th
always was and there always has been," Thomas states
think the thing that forces that is the character of
Thing. You almost can't draw him unless he looks lik
Kirby character. He is, at least, the penultimate Jack Ki
character.He's my favorite Marvel super-hero."

A lot of artists have worked on **The Fantastic Four** over
years, as Thomas observes, and he was with Marvel
writing the title when some of them were involved, t
giving him an insider's perspective on that time.

"John Romita was the first post-Kirby artist wh
issues actually sold better than the last year of Ki
because Romita was just a very saleable artist at t
period.

"John Buscema never liked doing that kind of mater
but he was very good at getting that kind of feel when
wanted to.

"Rich Buckler, of course, was heavily influenced by Kirby. And there was Neal Adams (who did a couple of Thor's) and other people, as well as George who had been a Kirby-influenced artist.

"This culminated recently in John Byrne who decided that the best period of Jack Kirby was a year or so before I would have thought, and went back to 1964 and 1963 Kirby stories, principally in terms of artwork. But, of course, everyone goes off on their own eventually.

"The only thing that I wanted to do," Thomas explains, "was experiment around with other characters in there. I had Power Man join for awhile and I wasn't the first person to do that. Stan himself had put Crystal in earlier. It's as if somebody is always replacing somebody else. One character I never thought they'd replace, but they did for a long time, was The Thing. I always felt that the book just wasn't right without The Thing, no matter who was doing it. I just couldn't get interested in The Fantastic Four without The Thing, so when they took him out I stopped reading it. I wasn't very interested in The She-Hulk.

"What I wanted to do, which is just what John Byrne and everyone else was trying to figure out, was take what I liked most about the FF family and/or the Jack Kirby approach, and try to fit that in. In my case, I wanted to have fun with the stories. Otherwise, I can't recall anything in particular that I did. Some of them were a lot of fun — some of them didn't work out quite so well."

RETURN TO GLORY

John Byrne, who as a child discovered the FF with their pivotal issue number five, became disenchanted with Chris Claremont on the **X-Men** and decided to look elsewhere for a book where he could stretch creatively. What he settled on was the FF, which is still Marvel's flagship title. Byrne had drawn the FF a couple of years prior to this latest stint on it but he was not satisfied with the stories or his art. Once again those earlier issues had been inked by Joe Sinnott and that special frission found in Byrne's art was nowhere to be seen.

SWEEPING CHANGES This time Byrne approached the FF with a much stronger idea of what he wanted to do and this was heavily influenced by the feelings he had carried away from those early Lee/Kirby issues. His goal was to not only infuse the book with the same sort of energetic atmosphere of those early years, but to once more bring change and growth to the title, something which had been absent. The FF had long been a victim of recurring plot twitches such as losing their powers only to regain them one way or another a couple issues later. This has been done so often that whenever it reappears it's, "Oh, no, not this plot again!" Byrne has been very successful at capturing the feel of excitement of those early days although he has fallen victim to the Galactus syndrome. Another cliche has been to return Galactus, who must absorb the energies of Earth to live, only to have him bamboozled into leaving at the end of the story. He marked time with yet another one of those. Ho hum. Galactus, like most cosmic characters, became dull quickly because what can you do with him which hasn't been done already except to kill him?

One of the best of these earlier stories was "Terror in a Tiny Town" in number 236; an amazingly effective story whose plot was borrowed uncredited from the Frederik Pohl science fiction story "Tunnel Under the World."

Byrne's writing on this title has been remarkably good considering he had little previously credited (outside of co-plotting the **X-Men**), other than **Marvel Two-In-One number 50**, a sad attempt at scripting a nostalgic Sixties-style story which took a terrific idea and squandered it by having a silly ten-page fight scene in a 17-page story.

Some previous writers of the FF, such as Len Wein and Marv Wolfman, have complained that Byrne is making too many sweeping changes by doing things such as summarily transporting the Great Refuge of the Inhumans to the blue area of the Moon. This is the whole point. The comic has been stagnant and predictable for a decade and Byrne is striving to change this, and succeeding. I've been reading the FF since number 13 and I like what I see these days. When a comic has dubbed itself "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" as long as this one has, it's about time that it did something to earn it rather than resting on the laurels of what Jack Kirby did almost fifteen years ago.

JOHN BYRNE

BACK TO THE BASICS

(From interviews conducted in 1983 & 1985)

"I began reading Marvel comics with **Fantastic Four** 5," says John Byrne about his introduction to the colorful quartet. "The essence of the **Fantastic Four** is the essence of the Marvel Universe. These are real people who just happen to have super-powers, as opposed to super-powered people who are trying to be real. It has always been important to the fantastic Four and to the rest of the Marvel Universe that human emotion be more important than the ability to lift a building. The Super is less important than the Man in the Marvel Universe."

Looking back on the formative years of the **Fantastic Four**, Byrne recognizes the special contributions of both Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, but has definite opinions on which talent the FF owes the most to.

"I think, and Stan will probably want my head for this, but I think that the departure of Kirby was really a loss in thrust for the Fantastic Four. Stan is a fabulous wordsman If there is anyone who has created the sound of the Marvel Universe, it is Stan Lee. But the whole thrust of the characters seemed to have come from Kirby. You need do no more than look at the villains of the Kirby period and then from the Lee and everybody else period and I would say,

INTERVIEW

with a great deal of conviction, that there has not been a
new ones since Jack left that would even be on the sca
with some of the weakest from Jack's period. I can't thi
of a post-Jack character that I would put on the level of
Gregory Gideon (FF 34).

"Whatever my ego has inflated to," Byrne continues, "
hasn't inflated to the point where I think I can crea
characters of the calibre as that achieved by Jack and Sta
I don't even attempt to create characters who can spin in
their own books. You're not going to get a Black Panth
out of me. I think that you're not going to get Inhumans o
of me. I would like to think some day, maybe, but not ye
I'm not going to hold up any character I've created and sa
this is the Black Panther, or anything. Galactus is really
vast untapped resource. I'm getting a lot of 'boy am I al
of Galactus stories' from people, but to me we have on
scratched the surface. I would love to spend time definin
who and what Galactus is. This is not creating character
it's developing them.

"If somebody had come to me and said, 'Take over **T**
Fantastic Four with issue 101,' I would have said no way—I'
not following Stan and Jack. But they came to me and sa
'Take over a 130 odd issues after Stan and Jack,' and it ha
been diluted, and I might say perverted, to the point that
had no qualms at all about taking it over. But I started o
by turning the clock back, so in effect I was taking ov
with issue 101. Really, nothing has happened since Sta
and Jack. I know a lot of writers who handled it in th
period have been offended by that approach. The sad thi
is that you can ignore a good hundred issues of the **Fantast**
Four because nothing significant happened.

"I think (Jim) Shooter presented me with the assumptio
that whatever I did with it would be an improvement. This
not diminishing what had gone on before, but it is
awareness that I cared about those characters and tha
had an enthusiasm for those characters which, in terms
least of what we see on paper, had not been there for qui
a while. If anyone was going to regenerate what had bee
the Fantastic Four, it was likely to be me or at lea
somebody who thought like me and there didn't seem to
anybody who felt like me who was interested at the tim
Roger Stern thinks like me but he still very much feels
timidated by the Fantastic Four." And, to an extent, Ste
still did think like Byrne even when he took over the F
from Byrne with issue 294.

"The whole thrust is that when you get down to ba
bones, **The Fantastic Four** is a generic title. Any four supe
powered beings can be a "fantastic four." Whether the
become *the* Fantastic Four with a definite article depend
upon how it's handled. The Thing has had his own since t
minated separate clearly distinctive title — it's not just
team-up book. There is no reason in the world that th
Thing couldn't leave the Fantastic Four permanently, g
off in his own book and then be replaced permanentl
There is no reason that the Torch couldn't leave, that Ree
or Sue couldn't leave or any combination thereof. I wou
hesitate to do it only because of my love for these pa
ticular characters. But that doesn't mean that I wouldn't d
it if I felt that the story would work because the story
foremost. If we came up with a good, powerful story, the
why not?"

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

One of the first things that Byrne did when he took over the **Fantastic Four** was to start working on refining the characterizations.

"I've been expanding on Sue's role since I started on the book. People are finally starting to notice that. They're not surprised any more when she takes charge and does things.

"Sue is your basic-issue female character. I've been re-reading the first 20 or so issues recently and she is very much your standard female character of the early Sixties in those books. She's kind of wimpy and her hobbies are reading romance magazines, things like that. She basically had no backbone worth mentioning, so when she did show strength it was an amazing thing and there were neon signs pointing to it: Gosh! Look! Sue has hidden strength!

"Nowadays, women have a more significant role just in day-to-day life," Byrne observes. "So obviously, without wanting to change who she is, without saying, 'We have to scrap the character and start from scratch,' I've tried to move her into the Eighties, to partially recreate her as an Eighties woman. But more, take that original Sue and have her look at the world through Eighties eyes. She says, 'Okay, I'm not this wimp whose sole function is to get captured by the bad guys any more. I'm a strong, self-sufficient member of the group.' When Reed's out of action, Sue becomes the leader of the group — things like that.

"The background on Sue is rather conflicting as far a whether she represents more of an Eighties housewife an Eighties career woman. We have a great deal of stu that tends to suggest she's just this basic housewife typ and yet there are also the elements of her background th she tried out to be a movie star and all kinds of things lik that.

"Anybody who's ever had even a brush with sho business knows that that's not a field you even survive in you don't have a strong core. You get chewed up and sp out in a hurry if you don't have something going for yo She was strong enough to survive that.

"The thrust is basically, yes, deep down she woul probably prefer to be a wife and mother (that was the a proach I took in the 20th anniversary issue), but she ha been thrust into this superhero role and as such is dealin with it. She's not curling up and blowing away, she saying, 'If I have to be a super-hero, I won't sacrifice m feminity or my personal view of the world, but I will ce tainly adapt them to meet the demands that this new, in proved job puts on me.'

"I'm inclined to think that she is the most powerf member of the group," states Byrne. "Part of the whol 'Dark Invisible Girl' story was to demonstrate just ho powerful Sue is. She has certain limitations because she 'one of the good guys,' and cannot utilize her power to it full extent. This is something that most heroes run int The Thing is always pulling his punches also.

"Sue has this vast power — it's tremendous. And b removing the barriers, by letting malice cut loose wit Sue's powerful force, I was able to demonstrate that this a lady that you don't mess around with if you want to sta healthy."

THE LONG, LONELY SOJOURN OF THE THING

"We're playing, of course, with The Thing's role in th group. This is building towards the 25th anniversary issu which is number 296. He has this orbiting role at th moment — he's never going to be permanently remove from the group as far as I'm concerned. When I wrote hi out, the intention was always to bring him back, and for th 25th anniversary issue. So we had approximately two yea (I think it actually works out to 30 issues) that The Thing i out of the book.

"This gave me the opportunity to mess around with th group dynamics. Obviously, She-Hulk presents a differe situation for the group than The Thing did. So Reed, Su and Johnny all react differently to her than they would t The Thing. This enables me to tap into areas of their pe sonalities that perhaps have never been seen before. Su has never had another woman to relate to in the grou Johnny has never had a sexy lady (other than his sister) t deal with, and just the whole change in the group' dynamics has certainly caused Reed to do som

eeing.

eaking The Thing up with Alicia was a step toward ging him back to the tragic character he originally . This is an ongoing thing that's going to come to a d towards the end of his own series, now that **The Thing** been cancelled. There will be a 3-5 month break when won't be seeing him in the Marvel Universe at all. Then turns up again in 296, in a very different form — ically different, emotionally different and much more he Thing of the first three or four issues. Even going going a bit far because he was starting to mellow out then. We're going to go back to a Thing who is angrier t being The Thing. More bitter, more Thing-like. He's d into rockman — he's sort of a quasi-Thing these he's not a monster any more. He's cute. I think that is umb. It's like coming to enjoy being the elephant You don't do that, especially in terms of Marvel time It hasn't been all that long. If it had been twenty , I would have said, 'Okay, he's probably adjusted to ut it hasn't and we have to keep reminding ourselves at. This is where we underline that he doesn't like The Thing. There are a lot of people who seem to have tten."

rne initially wanted to get rid of Alicia in his plan to ack to basics with The Thing, but here he hit a creative block.

hey wouldn't let me get rid of Alicia. They felt Alicia oo important to The Thing for me to get rid of her. So I loped that relationship along totally different lines. roblem with Alicia is that if The Thing is a tragic hero he has a beautiful blind girlfriend, he's not terribly any more. I turned it around so that the beautiful girlfriend is one of the reasons he is tragic. I want to more into that area. I touched on it briefly when Johnny duced Julie to Ben. She was frightened of him and I to remind people he is a hero but still, meeting him he first time is a shock. They are not used to this. mber, the public regarded him simultaneously as ster and a hero in the early issues.

e's going to be less of a known quantity again, but it still be obvious that even though this guy is ugly and y and snarls at everybody, he still does good work. e is no way to get around the fact that this guy's on our — that he's one of the good guys.

That, of course, was the charm of these first issues of **Fantastic Four** — the inherent contradiction of the mon- as good guy, as opposed to the cliche of the monster utomatic bad guy.

Stan Lee, in structuring those early days, clearly wan- to take every comic cliche he could lay hands on and n twist it. He did that very much with the FF. He took first ten years of the existence of Marvel Comics, when all 'I Battled Groot' and things like that and took your ndard-issue monster and twisted it — made him the d guy.

The Thing will come back as a permanent member of Fantastic Four. We're not sure at this point what will pen to She-Hulk. Obviously she's still active in The ngers."

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THE NEW OLD FANTASTIC FOUR

"These people are looking at themselves, each other and the group as a whole differently now. Not vastly differently because the core of the first 100 issues or so certainly set a course that doesn't have to be deviated from too badly. But in order to create that illusion of change, we have to rework the dynamics periodically," Byrne explains.

Over several years of storytelling about the same characters in monthly doses, some tales work well and some do not. It is interesting that the view of the storyteller does not always coincide with that of his audience. He may regard a popular story in a less satisfied way — and of course the reverse is also true. Which stories does John Byrne feel failed to achieve their goals?

"There have been two stories which didn't work as well as I had hoped they would. The one I did early last year with the Messiah character that brought back The Mole Man kind of lost itself halfway through and stumbled to an end. The same thing more or less happened to the Reed Richards mother story.

"The single most satisfying story that I have done is FF #5. It's the story of a 14 year old kid, a short little cauliflower type guy, who idolizes The Human Torch so much that one day he sets himself on fire. The story is about the repercussions this event has on the Torch. It was a very satisfying story to do. It allowed me to get into a lot of things; fantasy/reality elements. Without coming out and saying, 'Well, these are just comic characters,' I was able to address elements of the fantasy/reality line that fans always seem to be trying to cross.

"The basic thrust of my story, although it's disguised because we don't want to offend anybody, is that these things don't happen if the people in charge (which means parents or parental figures) do their job right. This kid falls into this idolizing of The Torch, and ends up killing himself because his parents are not there. They're too busy with their lives to pay attention to his life.

"My whole philosophy in child-rearing has always been:

if you have children, that's your job right there. If you have a job outside, you have to divide your time so that the kids get exactly as much attention as they would if you were there all the time. This is the underlying thrust of this story.

"It doesn't really matter if this story reaches the parents as long as it reaches the kids because it is pointing out to kids the fine line between fantasy and reality."

John Byrne's last issue of **The Fantastic Four** was issue 293 although some subplots followed through the following issues. When Byrne left Marvel, "The Last Galactus Story" which had been running in **Epic** was still uncompleted. Left unwritten entirely was the planned Invisible Woman miniseries and a Galactus graphic novel dealing with a renegade Watcher.

fantastic four 236: "As I Lay Dreaming..." — The story behin the story.

The story in issue 236 was one of the more imaginative and unusual to appear in the now 25 year run of **The Fantastic Four**. But that 20th anniversary story was not entirely original. While more than one reviewer has pointed out the obvious origins of the tale, John Byrne has never publicly commented on it. Even when discussing that issue in particular, he just refers to it as "Fantastic Four: The Movie" and gives no nod of recognition to the man who actually concocted the idea which Byrne rewrote so well.

"Tunnel under the World" by Frederik Pohl first appeared in the January 1954 issue of **Galaxy** magazine. One of its most recent republications is in **The Best of Frederik Pohl** (published in 1975 and reprinted in 1976). The best way to examine the parallels is to describe the original story and then see how Byrne adapted it. While all Byrne borrowed is the basic plot and idea behind the story, that skeleton remains a very unique specimen.

"Tunnel Under The World" opens with the following lines.

On the morning of June 15th, Guy Burkchardt woke up screaming out of a dream.

It was more real than any dream he had ever had in his life. He could still hear and feel the sharp, ripping-metal explosion, the violent heave that had tossed him furiously out of bed, the searing wave of heat.

The story goes on as Guy begins to perceive that something is wrong. While the world **seems** familiar, there are also differences. When he is looking around in his basement after changing a fuse, he finds that the cement floor is just a thin cover and that it's actually metal underneath. He also finds that a small boat he had been working on in one corner is not wood, which is what he'd made, but metal disguised to look like his crude wooden boat.

Eventually he finds that the explosion in his dream was r and that he and the town are all copies. That his own bo is a robot with his mind duplicated from his brain becau the people in the real town were killed in a chemical pl explosion. The kicker is at the end when he finds that and the town were recreated in miniature as normal siz people (appearing to him like thunderous giants) are st ding around the table-top town talking.

This is by no means a common science fiction plot, a in fact I defy anyone who hadn't read FF 236 first to h been able to guess the outcome. Pohl's story has ma other elements as it uses this plot as a satire on comm cial advertisers who use their miniature "typical" Americ town to test advertising campaigns to see which produc their community responds to,

To be fair, Byrne took the original concept and expe fashioned it into the Fantastic Four continuity.

"Terror In A Tiny Town" opens with a dream. it's a r of the origin of The Fantastic Four which concludes w the spaceship crashing and exploding. Johnny Sto awakens from the dream, shouting.

We then meet the other members of the FF (some whom are also being plagued with dreams) and see th leading a largely idyllic existence, except for Reed Richa Reed works at a university but is constantly bel belittled by a Mr. Vaughn and made to feel inferior. By t time, regular readers will have recognized The Pupp Master and will start putting the pieces together.

When Reed Richards suspects that he must be so sort of robot, he tests the theory by stabbing himself in arm. He screams in pain and collapses in what seems to a pool of blood...but it's not blood! We then soon learn t the bodies aren't robots, but are synthe-clones. But t rest of the people in the town are robots. It is at this po that we learn that the town is a miniature when Dr. Do leans over the tiny town and reveals himself to them. He a thunderous giant. The rest of the story shows how the break out and regain their own bodies.

What really makes this story a standout is the way t the non-super powered existence of the FF is portrayed appealingly. Other than "Mr. Vaughn's" browbeating Reed Richards and their disturbing dreams, their life i happy one. Alicia Masters can see and she is married Ben Grimm. At one point Ben even considers stayi there with Alicia because of how much more meaning life seems and how much better things are for Alicia. By took the basic idea and sensitively adapted it int moving episode in the life of The Fantastic Four. If story was intended as an **homage** to Frederik Pohl, it wo have been nice if an acknowledgement to Pohl had peared somewhere in the story.

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THE FUTURE

John Byrne left the F.F. abruptly with issue 293, about five years after he began his highlysuccessful tenure on the title. His departure was sudden and abrupt in that just one month before, Marvel had published an interview with Byrne in their house organ, **Marvel Age**, in which Byrne talked at length about his plans for FF 296 — the 25th anniversary issue. When Byrne contacted Roger Stern about becoming the new writer on the book, the anniversary plans were changed. Since Stern didn't want to have such a mammoth story as one of the first he'd be writing on the title, Jim Shooter plotted a story and Stan Lee scripted the issue with several artists handling the art chores with the issue broken up into chapters. Other than John Buscema, most of the artists on the issue had little or no connection with the title in the past. What Marvel had promoted as a major event wound up being completely changed from top to bottom.

Byrne had remained on the title for five years — longer than any other creative team had since Kirby left the book. He had originally announced his intention to break Kirby's record on the title, a plan apparently discarded due to behind-the-scenes events. Byrne didn't just quit the title, he left Marvel altogether.

Since probably no one likes the She-Hulk as much as Byrne does, it is safe to assume that she won't play as important a role in the stories as she has in the past. Issue 296 returned The Thing to the pages of the book after a prolonged absence, but this is a different Thing, a character more morose than he has been for many years and who has undergone another metamorphosis in which his appearance has become more frightening and deformed than in the past. For this reason he is always heavily disguised because he hates what he has become.

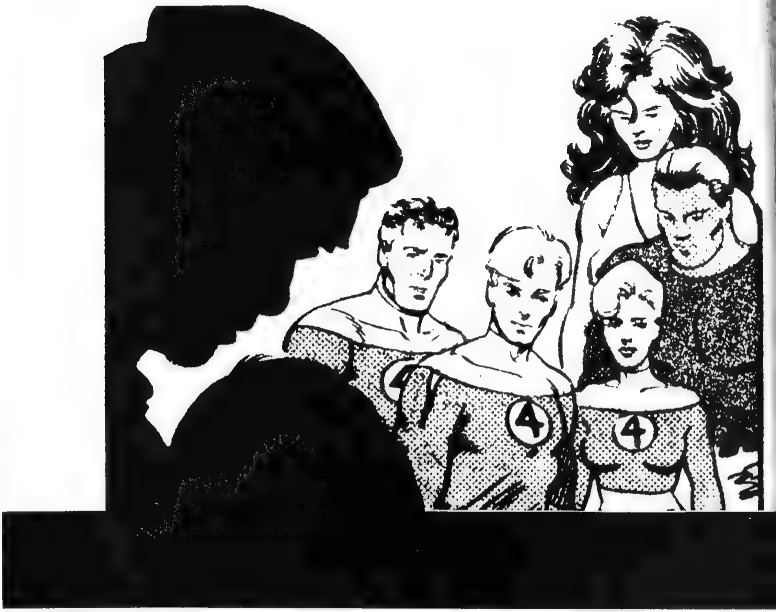
When The Thing returned from The Secret Wars, his intention was to break off his romance with Alicia Masters because he didn't feel the same about her any more. But The Thing had remained on the Planet of Beyonder longer than any of the other heroes and he found that events on Earth had bypassed and even second-guessed him as Alicia had taken up with Johnny Storm in Ben's absence. Even though he was going to break up anyway, The Thing was still furious over what had happened. Those events reach a new turning point when Alicia gets married in issue 300 (which is one of the John Byrne subplots that he had worked out and passed on to Roger Stern).

Jerry Ordway took over the art chores on the FF for two issues beginning with 294 and with 297 John Buscema returned as artist on the series for the first time in many years—but with a special difference. This time Buscema was inking his own pencils. Since John had never been completely satisfied with anyone else's inking of his pencils over the years, the result on a continuing basis should be interesting.

With near 300 issues to their credit (plus many annuals and specials), the FF have covered a lot of creative ground and it'll be interesting to see where the future takes it.

MIKE CARLIN AND ROGER STERN

LOOKING AHEAD



The 25th anniversary of the flagship title of Marvel Comics is coming up shortly. **The Fantastic Four** were created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1961. Through the years, the health and well-being of this title has tended to reflect the state of Marvel Comics itself.When changes were going on within Marvel and their superhero universe, such shifts were immediately noted in **The Fantastic Four.**

When John Byrne was busy becoming Marvel's brightest creative star , he chose the **Fantastic Four** to be his vehicle. But everyone was caught by surprise when three issues before the FF's twenty-fifth anniversary story, Byrne announced that he was leaving. After five very successful years at its helm, it was over.

One of the first people Byrne called after deciding to depart was his hand-picked successor, writer Roger Stern. "It started when I got a phone call from John Byrne one evening," Stern recalls. "He told me that he was going off the FF and that I should write it. That was all very well and good but I needed someone in authority to ask me. The next day I got a call from Mike Carlin saying, 'Write the **FF**!' And there I was."

INTERVIEW

Regarding Byrne's sudden departure, FF editor Mike Carlin states, "I guess John just got tired of doing the FF. He'd been doing it for years. I was surprised that he was going to leave right around then, but he seems to be having fun doing his new stuff." (Byrne's "new stuff" includes a revamping of the classic Superman character for DC.)

Stern goes on to explain that Byrne told him he was quitting because, "he was afraid of burning out on it. He'd started the first of a three part story and was afraid that he wouldn't do his best work. He wanted to get off the hook while he still liked the characters. He didn't want to do wrong by them— and I can understand *that*."

THE SPIRIT OF LEE & KIRBY

Mike Carlin, who has been editor of the title for the last couple of years, hopes to make the creative transition as seamless as possible. He doesn't want to see the course that the book has been taking for the past five years misdirected.

"I'm hoping to keep up the excitement that Byrne had for the book," says Carlin self-confidently. "He was very interested in the characters.

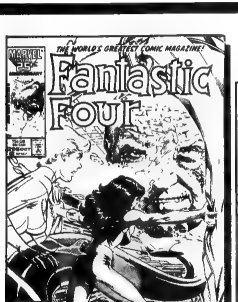
"I can't think of anyone who knows Marvel characters better than Stern except for maybe Jim Shooter himself. He really cares about the characters. What I want to get in the book is a sense of the old days, around issues 49—70. Every time you turned around something new was happening. New major characters were being introduced back-to-back — Galactus, the Silver Surfer — and you really didn't get a chance to breathe back then. I want to try to do that. I don't want anyone to have the chance to catch their breath, including Stern. Especially Stern."

Stern's outlook is very close to his editor's. He cites a similar period in the book's growth as the influence on the way he will approach the stories.

"Stan and Jack's stuff," agrees Stern enthusiastically, "from issue 5 to 85. That's a long range, but the book was consistently moving, growing and changing. That's the major influence. That and what John's been doing for the past five years because that was also his influence. I thought that John did a good job of doing the Eighties version of Stan and Jack's stuff. Mine will undoubtedly be different, but I want to get that old Lee and Kirby feel. You picked up the FF then and something was always happening —Galactus, the Inhumans, the Black Panther—they all originated during that period." When asked whether Stern had spoken to Lee or Kirby to get their views on how they had approached the book during those early years, Stern replies, "No, but you know that's not a bad idea!"

"I went into the city (New York) for a couple days and we sat around the office and just jawboned about the FF. I had lunch with Jim Shooter and we went over all this. Mike and Jim have been very supportive. Mike calls up every day or so and goes, "Hey, how about this?" and I go, 'Yeah, how about this?' and it goes back and forth. Every day or so the germ of an idea pops up.

4
STAN LEE PRESENTS:
JOHN BYRNE-PLOTTER
ROGER STERN-SCRIPTER
JERRY ORDWAY-PENCILER
AL GORDON-INKER
JOHN WORKMAN-LETTERER
GLYNIS OLIVER-COLORIST
MICHAEL CARLIN-EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



"I was really tense scripting the first issue," Stern continues, "because I was thinking this is the **Fantastic Four** — The World's Greatest Comic Magazine! The book we've been reading for years and years! But writing it felt good. I hope everyone likes it. I want to have a lot of fun doing it for a longtime to come! Every once in awhile I sit back and watch these characters come to life. Then I wonder if I am doing it or they are doing it for themselves!"

WHITHER THE FF

John Byrne's last issue of the **Fantastic Four** is 293. Jerry Ordway temporarily picks up the art chores for issues 294 and 295.

"Issue 294's plot was pretty much completed by John," says Stern who scripted that issue from Byrne's outline. "But issue 295 has a little bit more of me in it. Then 297 is the one where I really take off. That's completely written by me."

But what about 296? That was the anniversary issue. Byrne was to have drawn it prior to his decision to leave the title. With Byrne gone, it looked like the responsibility for the 25th anniversary story would rest with a writer who had just come on the title and was still exploring the characters.

"It's a big story..." says Stern. "Three issues after I start is the 25th anniversary story—oh my God! I said that I didn't know if I could handle something that big right away and still stay on schedule for the FF and **The Avengers**, which I also write. Someone — I think it was Mike Higgins — suggested to Mike Carlin that they get Stan Lee to script it. I thought it was a great idea!"

"Issue 296 is plotted by Jim Shooter, scripted by St Lee and is 64 pages, no ads," Carlin informs, "It's bei pencilled by Barry Windsor Smith, Kerry Gammill, R Frenz, John Buscema, Mark Silvistri and Jerry Ordway. I being inked by Barry Windsor-Smith, Klaus Janson, Ter Austin, Al Gordon and either Vinnie Colletta or Joe Sinn for a flashback."

The flashback will be a recap of the origin of the Fa tastic Four, pencilled by Kerry Gammill. "I have to wait a see how many pages i have after Barry-Windsor Smi draws his section because mine is going to go with hi Gammill explains. "But my segment will probably be abo 5 pages." This origin will follow the content of the origin story which appears in the first issue of **The Fantastic Four**, opposed to longer origin stories which appeared in lat years.

Originally John Byrne had announced a complicated a niversary story involving the FF's return to Monster Isla (last seen in **FF 1**), earthquakes threatening worldwi havoc and the search for The Thing. Some of these ide will be retained while others are being discarded.

"We are going to Monster Island in search of The Thing Carlin states. "I don't want to tell too much except to s that we find The Thing and he's back in the FF after that."

"There are a few common points (with Byrne's story) b not many." Stern adds. "The Mole Man is in it. Part of does take place on Monster Island.The Thing more-or-le returns to the series with that issue. Other than that, it very different."

The Thing has been absent from the FF since the fi **Secret Wars**, but the idea was Byrne's, not **Secret Wars** writ Jim Shooter's.

He started that before I was editor on the book." states lin. "It didn't hurt sales at all because She-Hulk was tly popular. We've planned to bring The Thing back in anniversary issue for a long time."

Following the anniversary issue, the new regular artist take over **The Fantastic Four.**

In 297, the new art team will make their debut. They are n Buscema and John Buscema, pencils and inks," lin clearly reveals. "He's going to be drawing ue 300 as well. Joe Sinnott might ink issue 300. He ed if he could and he's not the kind who asks favors. He me that he inked issues 100 and 200 and so he'd like to ble to ink issue 300 as well.

We'll be starting off with a bang in issue 297 by in-ducing a new villain who'll also be in 298. He's going to pretty tough. His name is Umbra.Issue 299 is probably ng to be a She-Hulk and Thing confrontation. It might ally be a drunken brawl!"

THE FANTASTIC FIVE?

The future of the She-Hulk becomes a mjaor plot thread oon as The Thing returns to the team.

She's sort of taken The Thing's place and has liked ng part of this group," Stern explains. "She enjoys ng with The Avengers but she enjoys this, too, in a dif-nt way. The Fantastic Four is a closer knit group. A nily. The Avengers are an organized team, but the FF is lly a family."

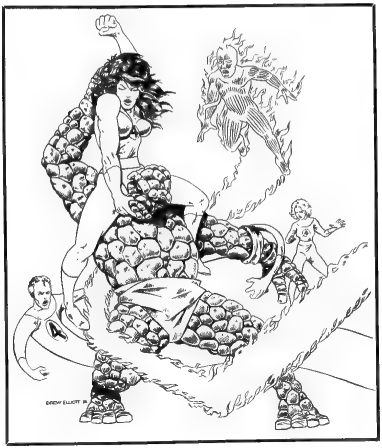
She-Hulk is actually going to be wondering what her ce is in the FF for a couple of issues," says Carlin of character that fans have both embraced and rejected. e is going to be around for awhile. It is going to be like Fantastic Five for a few issues. We still haven't cided whether she's staying or whether someone else is ng to go, but it won't be the Fantastic Five for long t's for sure."

When John Byrne first brought the She-Hulk to the team **Fantastic Four** 265), the initial response was mixed.

More people love her now than did when she first came the book," Carlin observes. "Up until then she'd been a aracter that hadn't really been handled to showcase her lor talents.Roger Stern put her in **The Avengers** first and rted waking people up to her potential. Byrne took it r and realized it. We got good response to her solo ue. Her graphic novel did pretty well. If Byrne had done e She-Hulk graphic novel two years ago, I don't think it uld have been as popular."

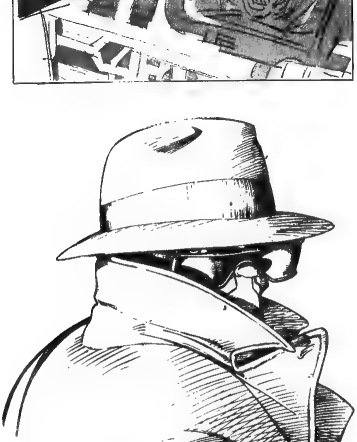
Stern will continue many of Byrne's plans including se for the future of the She-Hulk.

"John and I always kept in fairly close touch since I was ng **The Avengers** and he was doing the **FF,**" says Stern of ir working relationship. "The She-Hulk sort of bounces k and forth between the two teams. For a long time af-the Baxter Building was destroyed, the Fantastic Four



TWO ARTISTS CONCEPTION OF THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE THING SHE-HULK

were staying in the Avengers Mansion in their storyline. So he kept me apprised of what he was up to, where he was going with the book. I'll probably still be doing a number of things he had planned, but in subtly different ways. I write differently than John does. She is going to stay around in different capacities for quite awhile. It's going to be easier doing crossovers with **The Fantastic Four** and **The Avengers** now without running up my phone bill!"



JOY AND SORROW

There will be no **Fantastic Four Annual** in 1986.

"There will not be one because the anniversary iss so large," Carlin explains. "At 64 pages the annivar issue is essentially triple-sized. Issue 300 might be do sized. With that many high-priced FF products, I don't t it's fair to expect the fans to buy an annual, t Especially since the annual would have appeared abou same time as the anniversary issue.

"There is going to be a wedding in issue 300," S reveals. But that's about the only hard information h reveal about that very special story. "We're going to tr make this a wedding unlike any comic book wedding you've seen before. that won't be easy because the been done almost any way I can think of. But this on be done a little differently still, making it more difficu the next person who has to write a wedding in comics."

All that editor Mike Carlin will admit is that the wed involves Alicia Masters, the former girlfriend of The Th "That's just about the right amount to tell people. They probably figure it out—but then again they might not!"

After The Thing returns to the Fantastic Four, the st (beginning in issue 297) will deal with the alteration in relationships within the FF, particularly between Grimm and Johnny Storm.

"It'll be strained for awhile," Stern admits. "There very important things happening in the anniversary t between the Human Torch and The Thing. The Torch The Thing have always argued, but it's going to be bantering from now on. their arguing will take on a n serious tone because of what's happening to the Th The fact that the Torch has a romantic relationship with Thing's old girlfriend is not going to be easy. Even th The Thing returned to Earth having decided that t relationship couldn't go any further and that they sh break it off, the fact that it was already done for doesn't sit well. Memories will always be there. Se Johnny and Alicia would have to rankle.

"The Torch feels a little guilty," Stern adds. "He's in with his best buddy's old girlfriend. Even though the that Johnny and Alicia share is pretty strong, there's that underlying guilt."

There is also something else complicating the inte dynamics of the Fantastic Four after Ben's return. He' the same Thing that he was before. His appearance changed again, just as it did before. But this time Thing's appearance has become truly horrible.

"There's a scene coming up in a story I'm writin issue 297) where little Franklin sees The Thing for the time since this change has happened to him," S relates. "The boy is frightened and this is a ser emotional blow to The Thing. After all, this is his god and the kid's scared of him!" Part of the cause for Thing's frightening metamorphosis is Ben Grimm' posure to strange energies on the planet that The Be

k created in **The Secret Wars.** There are other elements in-ved as well. These will be revealed in coming issues.

AFTER THE ANNIVERSARY

Although Mike Carlin will continue editing **The Fantastic** r as before, he doesn't try to pretend that things will be e same as they have been for the past five years.

"Two people can do a story based on the same idea and ey would be totally different," Carlin explains. "Stern d Byrne, while equals, are still very different. Stern is a jor creative force. Having Buscema both pencil and ink e book, we'll get one man's vision there."

With issue 296, the anniversary issue, not due to appear ill August, Stern is still working with Jerry Ordway on his o interim issues. He's also planning the events to llow the Thing's return.

"The issue we're working on right now is 295." says rn. "Jerry Ordway is just finishing it up and I'll have to rt scripting it. Jerry's been doing an incredible job on s. I've never really seen his pencils before and they're ally beautiful. It's sort of a latter day cross between Wally od and Al Williamson. If you can imagine that. There's a of Woody in the things he does — architecture and ading. I can see why he wants to do more pencilling I lieve that Al Gordon is inking those issues.He's been the mi-regular inker on the book for the past six months.

"It's always interesting to see the Inhumans with the ," Stern says, "but I need to talk to Ann Nocenti cause she's writing an Inhumans graphic novel. I don't nt to come up with a storyline that would screw up what e's working on."

But there are even more dynamic characters than the humans in the long history of the Fantastic Four.

"When you think of the FF you also think of Dr. Doom," rn continues. "The two are always inseparable.

"On the other hand, because I'm writing the **Avengers** and FF I thought it might be fun to have them go up against ch other's adversaries for awhile just to get the differ-ce in approach. I'd like to see the Avengers take on Dr. om or Galactus and have the FF go up against Kang the nquerer or Ultron. And maybe something with the Sub-rliner. He's been an Avenger but he has a long history th the FF, as both an adversary and an old romantic in-rest of Sue's as well.

"Until I can think of a very different Galactus story, I n't have any plans for him. The Silver Surfer is a ssibility, but he has a limited series coming up and a aphic novel that I believe Stan is writing. I want to see at's happening with those first. The Surfer might show In a cameo appearance in issue 300. I haven't quite set-d on that yet.

"I'm going to keep the same rhythm that John Byrne s had in the book," Stern stresses, "with something ways happening!"

At the time of completion of this book, Mike Carlin had t left the position of editor although Roger Stern and ohn Buscema were remaining with the title. There was ik of brother Sal inking John's work.

HEROES AND VILLAINS

YOU AIN'T EVEN GOT A SENSE A' HUMOR!

MR. FANTASTIC
REED RICHARDS

A brilliant scientist, Reed Richards has been a lifelong friend of Ben Grimm since they were roommates at State U. After college, Reed joined the armed forces and fought in World War Two in the O.S.S. where he worked behind enemy lines aiding the underground in Europe.

Reed has known Sue, his wife, since she was the proverbial girl next door.

In 1961, Reed had designed and built his own spaceship with the help of his friends, Ben, Sue and her brother, Johnny. They slipped aboard his ship in order to blast off without having to be bogged down with the red tape of launch clearances. In space they were exposed to cosmic rays which had the freakish effect of changing them all and altering their physical structure to give them inhuman powers. There is now a possibility that Reed knew all along that this would happen, and that he in fact planned it because he believed the world was in need of the help that only super-human beings could provide.

Although for a time the Sub-Mariner became a rival for his affections towards Sue, she finally decided that Reed was whom she truly loved and they were married. They had a child, Franklin (named after Sue's late father), who has manifested powers but they have been controlled and made dormant. Reed fathered a second child with Sue but she suffered a miscarriage and it died.

Reed created uniforms out of unstable molecules so that the team can use their powers without their costumes inhibiting their movements.

Reed's power is stretching and provided he is not ill or otherwise debilitated he can stretch over one hundred yards before it becomes painful. He can also make his body extremely thin to travel through pipes or even under doors.

Reed's genius and natural command ability has made him the acknowledged leader of the FF. One of the few times this leadership was questioned was when his investments proved unsound and the FF went broke. A motion picture deal (financed by the Sub-Mariner as a plot to defeat them) turned in their favor and recouped their losses. Reed has been careful ever since.

THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

SUSAN STORM RICHARDS

Sue has known her husband, Reed, all of her life. She has always supported his decisions, even accompanying him into space.

The sister of Johnny Storm, Sue initially emerged from the mission into space with the power of invisibility. Later testing revealed that this had expanded so that she could project and control a force field, a power which has saved the team on more than one occasion. She can project an invisible force field as well as make people and objects invisible. She can also hurl tiny spheres of energy and other such variations on her power.

Sue's mother, Mary Storm, died in an automobile accident when Sue was quite young. Her father, Franklin Storm, a surgeon, was unable to save his wife. Wracked by guilt, he became an alcoholic and a gambler and borrowed money from a loan shark. When the loan shark demanded money they struggled and the loan shark was shot and killed with his own gun. Completely dispirited, Franklin Storm offered no defense and was sentenced to life in prison. Years later, by chance, he was kidnapped from prison and impersonated by the Super Skrull. When he was returned to earth it was as a human booby trap baited to get the FF. Franklin sprung the trap on himself to save his children and died a hero.

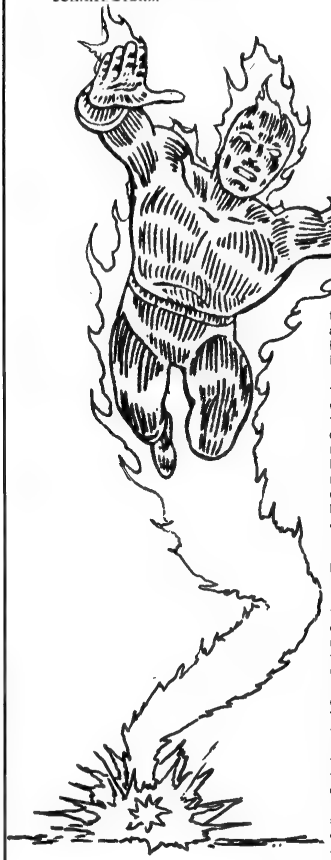
When Sue was pregnant, she took a leave of absence from the FF and was replaced by Crystal, one of the Inhumans. Due to the presence of strange "electro-flashes" in her blood cells, the rest of the team journeyed into the Negative Zone to secure a cure for her and had to battle Annihilus in the bargain. But the child was born safely. A second pregnancy some years later did not go as well.

When dominated by the Hate Monger and Psycho Man, Sue was brainwashed into becoming Malice — Mistress of Hate. She was so dangerous in this guise that the true potential of her powers was revealed. It is now believed that Sue may well be the most powerful member of the FF.

Following this incident, Sue had a period of self-realization and chose to thereafter be the Invisible Woman, signifying that she had passed beyond her days of innocence and naivete.

THE HUMAN TORCH

JOHNNY STORM



The younger brother of Sue Storm, Johnny had suffered from the little brother syndrome for a long time. He tagged along with his sister when she accompanied Reed and his imaturity made him as hot-tempered as his flame power implied.

The bitterness of The Thing caused bickering between the two in the early days of the team, one confrontation driving Johnny to impetuously quit the team. Wandering in the bowery, he encountereed a powerful, scruffy-looking derelict. Removing the man's thick growth of beard revealed him to be Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, who had been an amnesiac for 20 years. When Namor found his memory and his beloved Atlantis, the realm was abandoned and he blamed mankind, declaring war on all humans, and the FF in particular. Rejoining the team, Johnny helped defeat Namor on that first occasion.

Throughout it all, he remained a student at Glenville High School where he excelled as an auto mechanic, a hobby he has retained.

Johnny's first great love was Crystal, a member of the Inhumans, who can control the basic elements of earth, air, fire and water. She had joined when Sue had stepped down due to her pregnancy. When Sue returned, Crystal remained. But finally polutants forced Crystal to return to the Great Refuge of the Inhumans, where she married Quicksilver.

Johnny met the original Human Torch (who was an android) when the Old Torch was enslaved by the Mad Thinker. Although seemingly destroyed, the old Torch was turned into the Vision by the evil Robot Ultron 5.

Johnny became interested later in Frankie Raye, who it turned out was the daughter of the scientist who created the original Human Torch. Although Johnny loved her, she chose to become the new sentinel for Galactus.

Johnny became involved with Alicia Masters (the blind step-daughter of The Puppet Master) when Ben Grimm was off in space in self-imposed exile. They have become lovers and will apparently marry.

His power allows him to burst into flame, fly, throw fire balls and create a powerful super-nova blast.

THE THING
BEN GRIMM

Ben Grimm met Reed Richards when they were both in college, where Ben was attending on a football scholarship. In World War Two Ben was a fighter pilot. His skills made him the only choice to pilot Reed's rocketship.

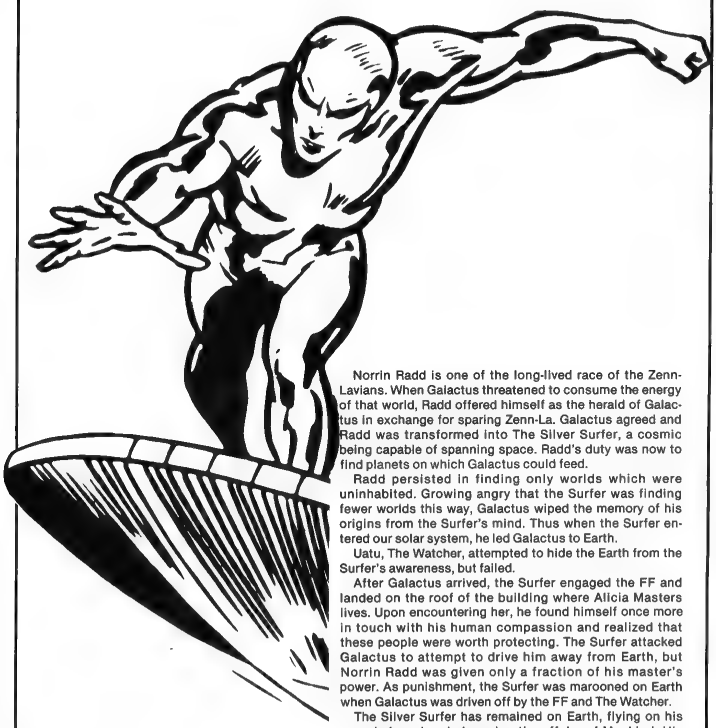
Possessed with great strength, Ben's rough hide is akin to that of a dinosaur and can stand up to a great deal of punishment. Although powerful, he is not tireless the way the Hulk is, which is the only thing that gives the Hulk the edge in a battle.

Although initially depressed, angry and embarrassed by his inhuman appearance, he has accepted how he looks just as his public have. His appearance has altered gradually over the years. During the Secret Wars on the planet created by the Beyonder, Ben found that he could change to human form at will and thus chose to remain on that world after the end of the conflict.

Ben has been involved with Alicia Masters (the stepdaughter of The Puppet Master) for a long time, but when he finally decided to return to Earth, he had decided that he no longer felt the same about Alicia. But before he could break the news to her, he learned that she had already gotten involved with Johnny Storm. Humiliated and feeling betrayed by his friend, Ben quit the FF and went off alone, toying with the idea of joining the West Coast Avengers. But then tragedy struck.

The gradual metamorphosis his body has been undergoing has taken a turn for the worse and his appearance has taken on a frightening cast. Due to this Ben fled civilization for Monster Island (where the FF had their first adventure with the Mole Man). They finally retrieved Ben from the island but he is still depressed and withdrawn. Even Franklin, his godson, finds Ben frightening now.

SILVER SURFER



Norrin Radd is one of the long-lived race of the Zenn-Lavians. When Galactus threatened to consume the energy of that world, Radd offered himself as the herald of Galactus in exchange for sparing Zenn-La. Galactus agreed and Radd was transformed into The Silver Surfer, a cosmic being capable of spanning space. Radd's duty was now to find planets on which Galactus could feed.

Radd persisted in finding only worlds which were uninhabited. Growing angry that the Surfer was finding fewer worlds this way, Galactus wiped the memory of his origins from the Surfer's mind. Thus when the Surfer entered our solar system, he led Galactus to Earth.

Uatu, The Watcher, attempted to hide the Earth from the Surfer's awareness, but failed.

After Galactus arrived, the Surfer engaged the FF and landed on the roof of the building where Alicia Masters lives. Upon encountering her, he found himself once more in touch with his human compassion and realized that these people were worth protecting. The Surfer attacked Galactus to attempt to drive him away from Earth, but Norrin Radd was given only a fraction of his master's power. As punishment, the Surfer was marooned on Earth when Galactus was driven off by the FF and The Watcher.

The Silver Surfer has remained on Earth, flying on his cosmic board and observing the affairs of Mankind. His closest brush with disaster was when Dr. Doom stole his cosmic powers. Only Doom's lack of knowledge about the special barrier Galactus had erected stopped Doom in his tracks, and when Doom encountered the barrier, the Surfer's power returned to him.

The Surfer's power cosmic enables him to live without needing to eat or breathe, and the flexible metallic skin he has is impervious to most any weapon.

SHE-HULK

Jennifer Walters is five years younger than her cousin, Bruce Banner, but when they were younger they were close. As they grew into adulthood, Bruce's connection to the military and top secret defense projects made it necessary to withdraw from his family and others outside that close-knit defense network.

Jennifer attended law school at UCLA (The University of California at Los Angeles) and upon graduating became a criminal defense attorney. She is the daughter of Elaine Walters (deceased) and Morris Walters, the sheriff of Los Angeles County.

Her cousin, Bruce, finally chose to visit her one day when she was in the middle of a dangerous case. She'd been defending one Lou Monkton, a hood framed for murder by crime boss Nicholas Trask. While she was driving with Bruce in her car, an attempt was made on her life by one of Trask's thugs. Seriously wounded, she required immediate attention and Bruce Banner rigged up a crude but effective blood transfusion as he knew that they shared the same blood type. Jennifer responded well to the treatment and when help arrived he left to avoid becoming too excited, lest he transform into The Hulk.

In the hospital, Jennifer revived but was unaware what her cousin had done for her until more thugs (masquerading as physicians) attempted to finish her off. Infuriated, Jennifer experienced her first transformation into the seven foot tall, statuesque emerald beauty who would come to be known as She-Hulk.

Unlike The Hulk, Jennifer could control her transformations at will, retained her human intellect and did not look like a brute. In fact, she enjoyed being She-Hulk and let her career as an attorney lapse. She became a member of The Avengers and joined The Fantastic Four when The Thing chose not to return from The Secret Wars. She has found The Fantastic Four to be very different from The Avengers as the FF has always been more like a family unit than a team of individuals who gang up to fight menaces.

During her tenure with the FF she became involved in a solo adventure with SHIELD, during which an incident caused her to lose her power to change back to her human form. Her response was, "So what's the bad news?"

With The Thing back in The Fantastic Four, Jennifer is uncertain about her own future with the team. She has come to care for these people as though they were her own family but she realizes that The Thing was there in the beginning at the group's formation, while she is a newcomer at best. Will She-Hulk remain with the FF? Will she leave? Or will another member of the FF choose to depart the group instead?

THE WATCHER

Before NASA sent men to the moon, Reed Richards perfected a spaceship which would shield its passengers from the dreaded cosmic rays and in it the FF journeyed there. Their mission was to explore the strange blue area which Reed had detected there. Upon arriving they found a strange being who calls himself The Watcher.

The Watcher is one of a race of cosmic historians whose current post is our corner of the galaxy. He is bound to a strict code of non-intervention due to the destruction of the planet Prosilicus which the alien's race had attempted to aid by giving them advanced scientific knowledge. Now The Watcher just observes from his strange home in the blue area of the moon, which contains an atmosphere.

Although pledged to non-intervention, the Watcher warned the Fantastic Four of such menaces as the approach of Galactus, and even attempted to mask the Earth from Galactus', but to no avail. Instead the Watcher revealed to the FF how Galactus could be driven off.

But the other Watchers believed such actions to be a violation of their code of non-intervention and he was disciplined for his violation of their sacred vow. Now the Watcher not only just watches, but he sometimes appears without speaking at all.

The Watcher has served as the host of Marvel's alternate reality series, **What If?**

THE INHUMANS

The descendants of an ages old Kree experiment, The Inhumans possess great powers which, as a race, set them apart from the rest of human kind.

The Fantastic Four first began to become aware of their existence when they encountered Madam Medusa, a member of The Frightful Four. When she turned against the others on her team, this led to the discovery of more fantastic beings and the fact that they lived in a secret mountain refuge called Attilan. She had fled when her insane cousin, Maximus, had overthrown the rightful rule. In short order the FF encountered her sister, Crystal, as well as the other members of the royal family — Black Bolt (Maximus' brother, who finally overthrew Maximus' mad rule), Gorgon (who can generate minor earthquakes with his hooves), Triton (a powerful sea dweller), Karnak (whose power is super karate), and Lockjaw (a huge dog who can interdimensionally transport people).

Black Bolt is actually the most powerful of the Inhumans. He is mute by choice because among his powers the greatest is the sound of his voice. When Maximus trapped their race behind an impenetrable barrier, Black Bolt shattered it (along with much of their kingdom) with a single shout.

Due to the problems of living on Earth, the Inhumans finally chose to transport the Great Refuge to the blue area of the moon where they would be certain to be safe from human contamination and interference.

DR DOOM
VICTOR VON DOOM

It began in the region of Europe now known as Latveria. There the seeds were planted which would topple a monarch and replace him with a man capable of both mercy and mercilessness.

A child of gypsies, his father was a healer, but his mother he barely remembered was a bonafide witch. After the death of his father, who died while protecting his son during a hunt by the soldiers of their local baron, Victor learned the truth about his mother. Armed with the knowledge that his father had been killed by those whom he sought to help. Victor turned against humanity, caring only for his own small band of followers.

Invited to attend State University, Victor experimented with attempting to contact the netherworld. An error caused a lab explosion which caused his expulsion from the university as well as the scarring of his face. Although his face has never been seen, the creator of Dr. Doom, Jack Kirby, states, "Actually Dr. Doom is a fine looking man, except that he's got a scratch on his chin because of a college accident in the laboratory. So he must have a mental aberration — he thinks he's ugly. And of course a mental aberration will give birth to evil of some kind, or conflict or jealousy. Dr. Doom is like that. That's the secret of Dr. Doom—he isn't ugly. He's handsome, but he's a perfectionist, and perfectionists are their own devils."

Von Doom met Reed Richards at State University and there began his rivalry with the man who would become Mr. Fantastic.

In his second attack on the Fantastic Four, Doom teamed up with the Sub-Mariner, but he was just using the powerful Namor for his own ends. That was his mistake.

Doom returned with the alien-granted power to exchange bodies with other living beings. He has also attacked the FF from a micro world as well as taking over their headquarters, the Baxter Building, when the FF had temporarily lost their powers. That time Doom met a humiliating defeat at the hands of a fighting mad Ben Grimm Grimm.

Perhaps Doom's most bizarre attack on the FF occurred when he kidnapped them and placed them in a machine which made them believe they were living a normal life in a small town which was really a small town — one populated by miniature androids powered by human thought.

The head of the nation of Latveria, he is a hard yet benevolent monarch. There is no poverty in his nation, and no ignorance. When Doom was toppled by revolutionaries, the new king — a decendant of the last ruler — proved to be a dictator who was soon overthrown by Doom. Latveria is again at peace. But Doom still plots vengeance on the Fantastic Four.

THE SKRULLS

The Skrulls first encountered the FF when they sent an expeditionary team to pave the way for their invasion fleet by neutralizing the effectiveness of the Fantastic Four to oppose them. The team, using the Skrull ability to alter their form, imitated the FF and committed crimes. The FF finally tracked down the Skrulls and impersonated them in order to trick the invasion fleet into withdrawing. The Skrulls left on Earth were hypnotized into assuming the form of cows. Although they were later killed in the Kree-Skull war, the "milk" they had produced as cows infected the community of Kings Crossing and gave the flora and fauna there (including people) temporary shape-changing abilities and warlike tendencies, until Mr. Fantastic cured them.

The Skrulls have continually plagued the FF. One of their number was sent to Earth and equipped with a device which enabled him to receive a power boost from a beam broadcast from the Skrull throneworld. This Skrull became a super skrull capable of imitating the powers of the entire Fantastic Four until the power transmissions to him were cut off and the Skrull was imprisoned on an island. The Skrull later escaped and disguised himself as a being called The Invincible Man, who was finally responsible for the death of Sue and Johnny Storm's father.

The FF journeyed through hyperspace to the Skrull throneworld thereafter to seek the one responsible for Storm's death and witnessed the death of the guilty Skrull when it attempted a coup. But the Skrulls themselves still did not consider the FF to be allies, merely at a temporary truce.

The Skrulls have suffered worse at hands other than the FF. Galactus consumed the Skrull throneworld and the remaining Skrulls, as a race, recently lost their shape-changing abilities, a fate that the FF were on hand to witness. They are a star-spanning race that has fallen on hard times and whose warlike nature has proven to be its undoing.

THE PUPPET MASTER

PHILLIP MASTERS

When Phillip Masters, alias The Puppet Master, first encountered The Fantastic Four, little was known about him, but over the years his background has been revealed.

Born in the tiny country of Transia in the Balkans. He moved to America with his family when he was 8. As a child, his cultural differences made him feel different from other children and so he withdrew into himself and spent much of his time carving wooden marionettes and sculpting clay figures from clay he had brought with him from Transia.

When he attended college where he studied for a degree in biology, he became friends with Marcia Deaton and Jacob Reiss, two fellow students. Deaton and Reiss married after graduation and Jacob established a small research center with an inheritance and invited Masters to join him as his partner.

Reiss and Deaton had a child, Alicia, and their success and happiness caused smoldering resentment in Masters as he saw in them a life such as he had come to believe he would never have for himself. This resentment came to a head one night when Masters sabotaged the lab in the research center. Although Reiss catches him in the act, Masters still managed to bring off the sabotage by setting off a bomb which caused Jacob Reiss to fall into a vat of the Transia clay which they had been experimenting with, which causes Jacob's death. The explosion also blinded young Alicia, which Phillip did not plan on.

A year later, Masters completes his dream by marrying Marcia and adopting Alicia, whom he hoped to one day cure of her blindness.

Experiments with the new form of the strange Transia clay revealed that it could be used to mentally control people when it was shaped into their image. Although Masters believes that this is because of its peculiar radioactivity, it seems actually to be because the clay is from the legendary Wundagore Mountain, which has been the tomb of the Elder God Chthon for 14 centuries, thus endowing the ground around it with mystical properties.

Masters's wife finally died from the lingering effects of the poisons she was exposed to in the explosion, leaving him with a daughter whose blindness he knew was from his own doing.

When Masters first began to use his radioactive clay for criminal purposes, his actions brought him to the attention of The Fantastic Four. At one point Masters disguised Alicia as Sue Storm in order to penetrate the FF's headquarters, but she was merely a catspaw and not truly a partner in crime with her stepfather. She became friends with the FF after this and had a long running relationship with Ben Grimm. When Grimm chose not to return from The Secret Wars, Alicia found herself drawn to Johnny Storm, a relationship that endured even after The Thing returned to Earth.

The Puppet Master subsequently used the Sub-Mariner to kidnap Sue Storm and attack the FF, but when Namor was freed from mental control, he used his powers to attack Masters and drive him off, ending the battle with the FF.

The Puppet Master has also teamed with The Thinker and attempted other unsuccessful attacks against The Fantastic Four.

THE MOLE MAN

The Mole Man is one of society's outcasts. Shunned because of his profound ugliness, he went into self-exile, searching for the legendary land at the center of the Earth. His travels took him all over the globe, and he observed, "Even this loneliness is better than the cruelty of my fellow men!"

By chance he found the mysterious Monster Isle and one of its caverns led him to a network of caves — a strange underground world. A rock fall caused him to lose much of his normal sight, but in its place he developed something akin to Daredevil's radar sense so that he can sense things which are nearby.

In his first encounter with the Fantastic Four, he was attempting to destroy all surface sources of power so that the realm which turned him out would be sufficiently weakened for him to attack it. His encounter with the Fantastic Four made him rethink those plans and he destroyed Monster Isle so that the FF couldn't pursue him into his underground realm. Strangely, though, when The Mole Man encountered the FF again, he blamed them for the destruction of Monster Isle.

The Mole Man continued his plots to wreck havoc on the surface world until he found that there were other surface misfits like himself and turned to finding a place for them in his underground realm of Subterranea. He has ruled this realm with Kala, Queen of the Atlantean netherworld. Although she once betrayed him to his nemesis, Tyrannus, they have since reconciled.

The Mole Man controls a race of mindless beings called Deviants as well as other denizens of his underground domain.

This is by no means intended as a definitive Index or checklist (Marvel is doing a fine enough job with the one they are publishing). Rather this is intended as a guide to appearances by villains and other special events in the 25 year history of "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!"

Issue 1 — Nov. 1961 — Origin story. FF first meets Mole Man

2 — Jan '62 — The Skrulls from outer space.

3 — March '62 — Miracle Man. Introduction of costumes, Baxter Building and original Fantasti-Car. Torch quit group at story's end.

4 — May 1962 — Revival of Sub-Mariner. Torch returns to team.

5 — July '62 — Intro Doctor Doom.

6 — Sept. '62 — Doctor Doom & Sub-Mariner team up

7 — Oct '62 — Kurrgo, master of planet X.

8 — Nov. '62 — Intro Puppet Master & Alicia Masters.

9 — Dec '62 — Sub-Mariner. FF go broke and make motion picture to recoup finances

10— Jan. '63 — Doctor Doom exchanges bodies with Reed Richards.

11— Feb. '63 — Behind the scenes at the Baxter Building and Intro The Impossible Man.

12— March '63 — FF meet The Hulk, battle the Wrecker and intro new Fantasti-Car.

13— April '63 — Red Skull & his 3 super-apes intro, Watcher intro.

14— May '63 — Puppet Master uses the Sub-Mariner against the FF.

15— June '63 — Intro Mad Thinker

16— July '63 — Dr. Doom Returns. Ant-Man guest appearance.

17— Aug. '63 — Dr. Doom

18— Sept. '63 — Super Skrull & Skrull King

19— Oct '63 — Intro Rama Tut

20— Nov '63 — Intro Molecule Man

21— Dec. '63 — Intro Hate Monger

22 — Jan. '64 — Mole Man returns

23— Feb. '64 — Dr. Doom

24— March '64 — An alien infant

25— April '64 — Hulk vs. The Thing.

26— May '64 — Hulk vs Thing, Avengers guest appearance

27— June '64 — Sub-Mariner, Dr. Strange guest appearance

28— July '64 — Mad Thinker, Puppet Master; X-Men guest star

29— Aug. '64 — Red Skull & his apes; Watcher guest stars

30— Sept. '64 — Intro Diablo

31— Oct. '64 — Mole Man; Intro Dr Franklin Storm (Sue & Johnny's father).

32— Nov. '64 — Super Skrull returns disguised as Invincible Man, Dr. Franklin Storm dies.

33— Dec. '64 — Teams up with Sub-Mariner against Attuma.

34— Jan. '65 — Gideon (a non-super powered villain).

35— Feb. '65 — Return of Diablo; intro Dragon Man

36— March '65 — Intro Frightful Four (Wizarrd, Paste Pot Pete, Sandman & Intro Madam Medusa).

37— April '65 — Skrulls & Skrull King; FF visit Skrull homeworld

38— May '65 — Frightful Four; Paste Pot Pete realizes name is ridiculous and become The Trapster. FF lose powers for first time.

39— June '65 — Dr. Doom, guest appearance of Daredevil (inked by Wally Wood in this issue only)

40— July '65 — Dr. Doom;guest appearance of Daredevil. The Thing defeats Dr. Doom in battle.

41— Aug. '65 — The Frightful Four; The Thing turns against FF

42— Sept. '65 — Previous story continues...

43— Oct. '65 — Gorgan, Medusa; Inhumans saga begins

44—Nov. '65 — Inhumans saga continues. . .

45 — Dec '65 — First appearance Black Bolt, Crystal, Karnak, Triton, Lockjaw, Dragon Man appears.

46— Jan. '66 — Origin of Inhumans; Dragon Man & Seeker are villains

THE Fantastic FOUR
1.0
FEATURING:
"THE THING!"
"MR. FANTASTIC!"
"HUMAN TORCH!"
"INVISIBLE GIRL!"
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ONE MIGHTY MAGAZINE!
I-I CAN'T TURN HUMAN! IT'S GONE FOREVER! OH, HE LOOK THIS CREATURE TONIGHT!
JUST AS I AND SUE ARE ABOUT TO BE FANTASTIC AGAIN! OH, BRUCE TO RIGHT!
THE THREE OF US CAN'T GO IT ALONE! I'LL HAVE TO THINK OF SOMETHING!
STILL TAKE MORE THAN BOPES TO KEEP ME OUT OF THE ACTION!

MARVEL'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
12¢
THE Fantastic FOUR
DOCTOR DOOM!
WITH A TURN OF THIS KEY I SHALL DESTROY THE FOUR OF YOU, FOREVER!
I'VE BEEN IN WORSE HAN- DLES AND GOT OUT OF THEM! I CAN'T BREATHE! MY STRENGTH IS GONE!
I MUST GET IN TO SAVE THEM! BUT HOW?
WHAT GOTTA HAVE HAIR
NO FLAME IN SPACE WITHOUT OXYGEN TO HELP FLAME!

47— Feb. '66 — Maximus first appe Bolt's evil brother).

48— March '66 — Intro Silver Surfe tus; climax of first Inhumans saga

49— April '66 — Silver Surfer, TheWatcher and The Punisher (robot sent by Gal

50— May '66 — Climax of Galactus s Surfer marooned on Earth. Intro Wyatt Wingfoot.

51— June '66 — Unidentified scient sonates Thing and sacrifices himself in Negat save Reed Richards.

52— July '66 — Intro Black Panther

53— Aug. '66 — Origin Black Panth Klaw.

54—Sept. '66—Intro Prester John. Bl ther and Inhumans appear.

55— Oct. '66 — Silver Surfer vs The Ti

56 — Nov. '66 — Klaw returns.

57—Dec. '66—Dr. Doom steals power Silver Surfer 58—Jan. '67—Super Dr. Doom vs. the Inhumans break free of Negative Zone.

59— Feb. '67 — Dr.Doom vs. th

60 — March '67 — Dr. Doomdefeate regains power.

61— April '67 — The Sandman

62— May '67 — Sandman; intro Blaster

63— June '67 — Blastaar, Sandman

64— July '67 — Kree Sentry

65— Aug. '67 — Intro Ronan, the Accu Supreme Intelligence

66— Sept. '67 — Origin of Him (a Warlock)

67— Oct '67 — Intro Him

68— Nov. '67 — The Mad Thinker (dis Dr. Santini)

69— Dec. '67 — The Thinker

70— Jan. '68 — The Thinker & his andro

71— Feb. '68 —Thinker & androids

72— March '68 — Silver Surfer

73— April '68 —Dr. Doom disgu Daredevil (crossover with Daredevil 37 & 38): appear Thor & Spider-Man.

74— May '68 — The Punisher, Silver Su

75— June '68 — Galactus, Silver Surfer

76— July '68 — Intro Psycho Man; tus,Silver Surfer

77— Aug. '68 — Psycho Man,Galactu Surfer

78— Sept. '68 — The Wizard

79— Oct. '68 — Android Man

80 — Nov. '68 — Tomazooma; Wyatt Wi appears

81 — Dec. '68 — Crystal joins FF, re Sue Storm

82—Jan '69 — maximus and the Inhuma

83— Feb. '69 — Maximus & Inhumans

84— March '69 — Dr. Doom

85— April '69 — Dr. Doom

86— May '69 — Dr. Doom

87— June '69 — Dr. Doom

88—July '69—Mole Man.

89— Aug. '69 — MoleMan

90— Sept. '69 — Skrulls Kidnap The Thin

91— Oct. '69 — Skrulls

92— Nov. '69 — Skrulls

93— Dec '69 — Skrulls

94— Jan. '70 — Frightful Four; intro A Harkness and her cat, Ebony.

95— Feb. '70 — Crystal leaves FF, Sue re

96— March '70 — Mad Thinker and H droids

97— April '70 —Alien creature

98— May '70 — Kree Sentry

99— June '70 — Torch goes wild; Inh appear

100— July '70 — Thinker, Puppet Maste multitude of androids.

101— Aug. '70 — The Maggia; Jack Kirby the FF

102— Sept. '70 — Magneto

103— Oct. '70 — Magneto; appearance b Mariner

104— Nov '70 —Magneto; appearance b Mariner

105— Dec. '70 — Someone's experimen amuck.

106— Jan. '71 — Concluded from pre issue

107— Feb. '71 — Thing is able to change back
m to human form.
108— March '71 — Nega-Man
109— April '71 — Annihilus
110— May '71 — Annihilus defeated; Thing

111— June '74 — The FF versus Ben Grimm!
112— July '71 — The FF & The Hulk vs. Ben

113— Aug. '71 — The Thing regains his sanity.
114— Sept. '71 — The Over-Mind (of The Eter-
The FF
115— Oct. '71 — Over-Mind controls mind of
lastic
116— Nov. '71 — Dr. Doom allies with FF
Over-Mind
117— Dec '71 — Diablo returns.
118— Jan. '72 — Diablo defeated; story with
ite universe Sue Storm, Reed Richards an-
mm.
119—Feb. '72—Return of Klaw; Black Panther

120— March '72 — The coming of Gabriel, the
ald of Galactus
121— April '72 — Gabriel robot destroyed,
urfer appears as guest star.
122— May '72 — Galactus attacks Earth again.
123— June '72 — Galactus sent into Negative
uest appearance by Richard Nixon!
124—July '72—Return of alien creature from

125— Aug. '72 — Conclusion of alien's story.
126— Sept '72 — Origin recap
127— Oct. '72 — Kala, MoleMan and the sub-
ans are up to no good.
128— Nov. '72 — Tyrannus mixes it up with
lan
129— Dec. '72 — The Frightful Four, with
e replacing Medusa.
130— Jan '73 — The Frightful Four defeated.Sue
the FF to be replaced by Medusa.
131— Feb. '73 — The Inhumans are plagued by
us again
132— March '73 — The Inhumans vs. Maximus.
133— April '73 — The Frightful Four; Thundra
Thing.
134— May '73 — Gregory Gideon pits Dragon
inst the FF.
135— June '73 — Gideon & Dragon Man
ed.
136— July '73 — The Shaper of Worlds (from
6)
137— Aug. '73 — FF vs. Warhead.
138— Sept. '73 — Return of The Miracle Man
F 3)
139— Oct '73 — Miracle Man.
140— Nov. '73 — Annihilus again.
141— Dec. '73 — Annihilus defeated; Reed's
eals deadly powers that Reed contends with by
g down his son's mind, making him a mindless
ple
142— Jan. '74 — Dr.Doomand his creation,
ll
143— Feb. '74 — Dr. Doom
144— March '74 — Dr Doom
145—April '74 — Ternak, the monster who
s the midnight snows!
146— May '74 — Ternak
147— June '74 — The Sub-Mariner; Sue begins
e proceedings against Reed Richards!
148— July '74 — Sub-Mariner; Thundra reforms
149— Aug. '74 — Sub-Mariner; Sue & Reed
cile
150— Sept. '74 — Therobot Ultron-7 strikes.
151— Oct. '74 — Mahkizmo, the Nuclear Man
152—Nov. '74—Mahkizmo still hangin' around
153— Dec. '74 — Mahkizmo
154— Jan. '75 — The Mystery Villain (Nick
reprint of "The Mystery Villain" from **Strange Tales** 127
ahback.
155— Feb. '75 — Dr. Doom and The Silver Sur-

156— March '75 — Dr. Doom& TheSilver Sur-

157— April '75 — Dr. Doom, Mephisto & The
r Surfer.

158— May '75 — Xemu,fromthe 5th Dimension (see **Strange Tales** 103).
159— June '75 — The Inhumans, Medusa leaves FF and Sue Richards returns.
160— July '75 — Arkon andA.E. DeVoor
161— Aug '75 — Andrones and the inter-dimensional war.
162— Sept. '75 — Arkon, Andrones & A.E.DeVoor
163— Oct. '75 — Gaard, Arkon and that ol' debbie the inter-dimensional war.
164— Nov '75 — The return of Marvel Boy from the Fifties, now known as The Crusader Intro FrankieRaye.
165— Dec. '75 —The Crusader destroyed in this story.
166— Jan. '76 —The IncredibleHulk!
167— Feb. '76 — Hulk (continues inHulk 195)
168— March '76 — The Wrecker

169—April '76—Puppet Master controlling Luke Cage.
170—May '76 — Puppet Master
171— June '76 — Gorr, one of the New Men of the High Evolutionary
172— July '76 — Galactus and The Destroyer!
173—Aug. '76—Galactus wants Counter-Earth.
174—Sept. '76—Galactus.
175— Oct. '76 — Galactus vs The High Evolutionary.
176— Nov. '76 — The impossible Man and the FF visit the offices of Marvel Comics.
177— Dec '76 — The Frightful Four with Brute (Reed Richards of Counter-Earth as the new member of the villainous super-teams).
178— Jan. '77 — The Brute replaces Reed in the FF.
179— Feb. '77 — Brute,Annihilus and Metalloid.
180—March '77—Reprint of FF 101 (abridged).
181— April '77 — Annihilus and a Negative Zone monster controlled by The Mad Thinker.
182— May '77 — Sue Richards vs. TheBrute
183— June '77 — The Mad Thinker; The Brute returns to normal.

184— July '77 — The Eliminator
185— Aug. '77 — The Witches of NewSalem.
186— Sept '77 — Salem's Seven: Brutacus,Hydron,Thornn,Vakume,Gazelle, Reptilla and Vertigo.
187—Oct '77 — Klaw and The Molecule man
188— Nov '77 — Reed Richards possessed by Molecule Man; FF break up
189— Dec. '77 — Reprint of FF Annual 4's "TheTorch That Was."
190—Jan. '78—Flashbacks on highlights in the FF's long career.
191—Feb. '78—Lord Plunder tries to loot-the Baxter Building.
192—March '78—The Texas Twister vs. The Torch.
193— April '78 — Diablo & Darkoth vs. The Thing.
194—May '78—The death of Darkoth.
195— June '78 — The Retrievers of Atlantis vs. Namor & Sue Richards.
196— July '78 — Reed Richards hypnotized to be The Invincible Man.
197— Aug. '78 — Reed Richards regains his powers.
198— Sept. '78 — Dr. Doom
199— Oct. '78 — Dr. Doom
200— Nov. '78 — Dr. Doom vs. Reed Richards in a fight to the finish.
201— Dec. '78 — The FF vs. the Baxter Building.
202—Jan. '79 — The return of Quasimodo (see **FF Annual** 5).
203— Feb. '79 — A mutant child accidentally creates evil duplicates of the FF.
204— March '79 — The FF involve themselves in a galactic war against the Skrulls.
205— April '79 — The war with the Skrulls.
206— May '79 — The war with the Skrulls

207— June '79 — Torch & Spider-Man vs. The Monocle.

208— July '79 — FF & Nova vs. The Sphinx.

209 — Aug '79 — FF, Nova & Guardians of theGalaxy, Intro Herbie

210— Sept. '79 — The search for Galactus.

211— Oct. '79 —Terrax becomes new herald of Galactus.

212— Nov. '79 — Galactus vs. The Sphinx.

213— Dec '79 — FF vs. Terrax & Galactus.

214—Jan. '80 — — FF cured of deadly aging ailment.

215—Feb. '80—Blastaar, the living bomburst.

216— March '80 — Blastaar defeated by little Franklin.

217— April '80 — Central computer tries to use Herbie against FF; Herbie destroyed.

218— May '80 — Spider-Man & FF vs. new Frightful Four (which now includes Electro).

219— June '80 — Capt. Barracuda steals Namor's special horn to summon sea beasts to attack New York.

220— July '80 — The FF find aliens at the North Pole!

221—Aug. '80 — The FF help the aliens on their way

222—Sept. '80 — Franklin is possessed by Nicholas Scratch.

223— Oct. '80 — Showdown with the Salem Seven.

224— Nov. '80 — FF vs.vikings from space.

225— Dec. '80 — Thor & the FF vs. the space gods.

226— Jan. '81 — The Samaurai Destroyer robots.

227— Feb. '81 — The Brain parasites!

228— March '81—Ego-Spawn, the machine-magnified power of Franklin Richard's mind.

229— April '81 — Ebon-Seeker, the thing from the blackhole

230— May '81 — The Avengers, the FF andFire Frost vs EbonSeeker.

231— June '81 — Stygorr and nightmares in the Negative Zone!

232— July '81 — Diablo sends his mystic elementals against the FF.

233— Aug. '81 — The Torch solves a 2 year old murder & frame-up pulled on someonehe never even cared about.

234— Sept. '81 — The man with the power!

235— Oct. '81 — The FF battle the living planet — Ego!

236— Nov. '81 — Dr. Doom & The Puppet Master kidnap the FF and make them believe they are normal people living normal lives, and always have been! Plus a revised, condensed retelling of the FF's first encounter with Dr. Doom but with Herbie the robot instead of the Torch. Special 20th anniversary issue.

237— Dec. '81 — The FF help another stranded alien.

238— Jan. '82 — The secret of Frankie Raye is revealed.

239— Feb. '82 — Wendy's strange, unearthly friends!

240— March '82 — The Inhumans move their refuge to the Moon!

241— April '82 — The FF & Black Panther find a strange lost Roman colony in Africa.

242— May '82 — The FF vs. Terrax the Untamed, again.

243— June '82 — Galactus, again.

244— July '82 — Frankie Raye becomes the new herald of Galactus.

245— Aug. '82 — Franklin mutates into an adult, but is cured.

246— Sept. '82 — Dr. Doom

247— Oct. '82 — Dr. Doom regains the throne of Latveria.

248— Nov. '82 — The Inhumans.

249— Dec. '82 — The Gladiator.

250— Jan.'83 — The Gladiator, M Man,Captain America and the Skrulls.

251— Feb. '83 — Journey into the N Zone — Part One.

252— March '83 — Negative Zone — Pa

253 — April '83 — Negative Zone — Pa

254— May '83 — Negative Zone — Part t

255— June '83 — Negative Zone — Part

256— July '83 — Negative Zone — Pa conclusion.

257— Aug. '83 — Galactus.

258— Sept.'83 — Dr. Doom.

259— Oct. '83 — Doom uses Tyros the against the FF.

260— Nov. '83 — Dr. Doom is see destroyed.

261— Dec. '83 — The search for Reed Ri

262— Jan. '84 — Reed Richards is t sparing the life of Galactus.

263— Feb. '84 — Johnny Storm is kidna use his power.

264— March '84 — The Mole Man.

265— April '84 — She-Hulk joins the return from Secret Wars.

266—May '84—The menace of Karisma.

267— June '84 — Reed Richards vs. Dr. topus; Sue Richards loses her second child miscarriage.

268— July '84 — The mask of Dr. Doom.

269— Aug. '84 — Terminus.

270— Sept '84 — Terminus.

271— Oct. '84 — Gormuu (take-off on J pre-hero comics).

272— Nov. '84 — the return of Reed Ri father.

273— Dec. '84 — The secret of Reed Ri father.

274— Jan. '85 — A solo adventure Thing.

275— Feb. '85 — Somebody took n pictures of She-Hulk!

276— March '85 — Mephisto uses a wo attack theFF.

277— April '85 — Mephisto defeated returns fromSecret Wars.

278— May '85 — FF attacked by pho Doom who steals Baxter Bldg.

279— June '85 — Doom destroys building but is defeated.

280— July '85 — The Hate Monger washes Sue Richards.

281— Aug. '85 —FF vs. Sue Richards.

282— Sept. '85 — FF journey to the world of Psycho-Man.

283— Oct. '85 — FF vs. Psycho-Man.

284— Nov. '85 — Psycho-Man defeated Hulk rescued.

285— Dec. '85 — The tragedy of the boy wanted to be The Torch.

286— Jan. '86 — The return of Jean Grey!

287— Feb. '86 — The return of the re Doom.

288—March '86—Dr. Doom vs. The Beyo

289— April '86—Blastaar and Annihilus.

290— May '86 — FF vs. Blastaar & Annihi

291—June '86—The FF in the past, o they?

292—July '86—Trapped in time in theIr minds

292— July '86 — Trapped in time, in their own minds!

293— Aug '86 — She-Hulk vanishes in great Black Out.

294— Sept. '86 — The FF explore the se the "Black Out."

295—Oct. '86—The secret revealed!

296— Nov. '86 — FF vs. The Mole Ma return of The Thing to the FF. 25th anniversary issue.

FANTASTIC FOUR GIANTS

NNUAL 1 — 1963 — Sub-Mariner's legions invade New York. Retelling of when Spider-Man tried to join FF. Plus the origin of the FF (Reprint from FF1)

NNYAL 2 — 1964 — The origin of Dr. Doom. Reprint from FF 5 of first Dr. Doom story. New encounter with Dr. Doom and FF.

NNUAL 3 — 1965 — The wedding of Reed and Sue. (Plus reprints from FF's 6 & 11)

NNUAL 4 — 1966 — The new Torch meets the Golden Age Human Torch. Plus reprints of FF 25 & 26.

NNUAL 5 — 1967 — Intro Psycho-Man; guest-starring The Inhumans. A Silver Surfer solo story.

NNAUL 6 — 1968 — Intro Annihilus; Reed and Sue's son born in this story.

NNUAL 7 — 1969 — Reprints from FF 1 and Annual 2.

NNAUL 8 — 1970 — Reprints from Annual 1.

NNUAL 9 — 1971 — Reprints from FF 43, Annual 3 and **Strange Tales** 131.

NNUAL 10 —1973 — Reprints from Annuals 3 & 4.

NNUAL 11 — 1976 — The FF meet the Golden Age Sub-Mariner, Human Torch, Captain America, Bucky and Toro inthe Golden Age!

NNUAL 12 — 1977 — FF and Inhumans vs. Ths Sphinx.

NNUAL 13 — 1978 — FF vs. The Mole Man.

NNUAL 14—1979—FF vs. The Salem Seven.

NNUAL 15 — 1980 - FF vs. the Skrulls; plus Dr. Doom rises from the dead.

NNUAL 16 — 1981 — FF encounter Dragon Man and Dragon Lord.

NNUAL 17 — 1983 — In which the FF discover that Skrull cows can give a very weird grade of milk!

NNUAL 18 — 1984 — FF and Inhumans encounter a Skrull on the moon.

NNUAL 19 — 1985 — A galactic conflict results in the Skrulls losing their shape-changing abilities.

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GIANT-SIZE 2 — Aug. 1974 — The Watcher sends the Thing back in time.

GIANT-SIZE 3 — Nov. 1974 — The FF vs. the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

GIANT-SIZE 4 — Feb. 1975 — FF vs. Madrox, the Multiple Man.

GIANT-SIZE 5 — May 1975 — Reprints from FF 15 and An-Annual 5.

GIANT-SIZE 6 — Oct. 1975 — Reprints Annual 6.

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